SINGULARITY

ACTS TWO AND THREE

TRAVELLER

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ACT TWO: RENEGADE MINDS
ACT THREE: THE GLASS COUNCIL

CREDITS

CLASSIC TRAVELLER

Marc Miller

MONGOOSE TRAVELLER

AUTHOR
Chris Griffen

EDITOR
Matthew Sprange

LAYOUT AND GRAPHIC DESIGN
Cassie Gregory

ILLUSTRATIONS
Nikita Vasylchuk, Mark Graham, Dimitar Spasov, Xavier Bernard, Allen Godwin Marucut, Júlio Rocha, Jeferson Cordeiro, Lee Doyle, Mino Yan

PROOFING
Charlotte Law

SPECIAL MENTION
Paul Drye, James Maliszewski and Loren Wiseman

TRAVELLER INNER CIRCLE

Andrew James Alan Welty, Colin Dunn, M. J. Dougherty, Rob Eaglestone, Sam Wissa, Joshua Bell, Maksim Smelchak, Geir Lanesskog, Christopher Griffen

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ACT TWO

RENEGADE MINDS

INTRODUCTION

The second act of *Singularity* ramps up the tension and action. In *Act 1: Sylean Dream*, the Travellers went far and wide within the Core, visiting many of its worlds and helping the passengers of the *Ventura Fortuna* to enjoy them. They saw some things that may have surprised them; the complex politics of the nobility, the criminal underworld, an independence movement and secrets that the Imperium would prefer to keep hidden. Over time, the Travellers discovered that there were also secrets being kept in their own midst. They were the unwitting accomplices of a conscious intelligence, a highly advanced machine of unknown origin that they came to know as Naalir. In the process of travelling together, they and their benefactor got to know the Core – and by extension, the Imperium – better. What they learned may have changed their perspective on things or it may have reaffirmed their beliefs.

In the dramatic conclusion of the first act, Naalir successfully duplicates its original structure within the chrysalis on the *Ventura Fortuna*, after which it no longer requires half-strength replications to operate independently. However, to unleash its full potential, it must either reacquire its original processing multiplier – extracted by Vilani scientists millennia ago – or duplicate the device after acquiring manufacturing specifications from Reference, the famous Imperial information repository. If it can obtain this, its full intellect will be unleashed and it will be free to achieve its destiny. As agents of this event, the Travellers can determine the future course of history.

Naalir revealed its intentions over the course of two events: the Reverie and the Declaration. The Reverie occurred aboard the *Ventura Fortuna*, as Naalir completed the construction of its advanced brain and arose from the chrysalis. Afterwards, the CI was in a state of dreamlike stupor. The tendrils of its chrysalis extended throughout the ship and tore it apart in a nightmare-like fugue. The Travellers either escaped aboard the *Velos tis Alitheia* or by some other means. If they did not manage to save their stealthy scout ship, they must find a new vessel and a location where Naalir can transfer its structure.

Once free, Naalir makes the Declaration. It wants the Travellers' help to create an interstellar utopia, a place where sophonts are free to make decisions without fear of political strife, societal breakdown and the eventual collapse of empire. The keystone of this venture is something called the Determinism Engine, an entity comprised of a collection of conscious intelligences, planted at various nexus points throughout the Imperium and potentially all of Charted Space. Siding with Naalir is a big risk. They must decide whether they believe in it and trust it. They have seen it in action during their adventures aboard the *Ventura Fortuna.* They have built a relationship with it and obtained a sense of its plans. This is a major inflection point, wherein the Travellers must decide whether to help the CI to achieve its goals.

Naalir sends the Travellers on a series of adventures throughout Charted Space, the likes of which they have never experienced; Naalir will pursue these goals with or without them. The narrative assumes that they do. The Travellers can use the Allies and Contacts they made in the first act to take on the many challenges of the second. However, if they choose to oppose Naalir, then they become its nemeses. Naalir breaks free from their grasp and seeks alternative means to obtain what it needs to pursue its goals. The Travellers can make allies with agencies that seek to prevent the CI from achieving intellectual omnipotence, a point at which no current technology will be able to restrain it from doing what it wants. They have the chance to enable a god-like technology to restructure and reinvent everything they have ever known... or, they can attempt to stop it, to make sure things stay the same and stability is preserved.

No matter which path they choose, the Travellers must go 'through the looking glass', having their consciousnesses digitised and transported to faraway places, where they must either aid – or prevent – Naalir in achieving its goals.

TRANSITIONS

Orchestrating this campaign requires a delicate balancing act by the Referee, a weaving of plotlines if you will. The first is the series of adventures in the campaign. The Lost Civilisation of Guun is enacted by the Travellers in their original bodies, the physiques in which they were born. The other three use the

rules described in Consciousness Transfer on page 73 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. These adventures take the Travellers out of their original bodies and have their recorded consciousnesses installed into 'embodiments': robot, android or clone vessels from which simulations of their original selves may operate. They were introduced to this concept in the first act but in the second it becomes a major part of the narrative.

The second thread is an infusion of the aftermath of the first act. During their voyages through the Core aboard the *Ventura Fortuna*, the Travellers inadvertently set several things in motion. They have awakened sleeping giants, asserted themselves into Imperial politics, brought into question the very fabric of the Imperium and willingly or not, they have become change agents of a cause. Whether they want to continue along that path is their decision, one that will guide and alter the events for the remainder of the campaign.

The third and final part of the narrative is the growing presence of menacing forces that begin to seek them out. Their secrets are being exposed and powerful agencies would like nothing better than to destroy their nascent efforts to empower Naalir (if indeed that is what they choose to do) before they reach fruition. This overriding narrative reaches it climax as the second act comes to a close and serves as the segue to *Act 3: The Glass Council*.

RUNNING RENEGADE MINDS

The first adventures, described in Destinations Unknown on page 26, are designed to be run in the following order:

- Second Reference
- Engine of the Ancients
- Suits
- The Lost Civilisation of Guun

This act has the Travellers involved both in adventures in the Core and in several distant locales. Second Reference has the Travellers flitting about the Core, seeking clues that will lead them to an artefact that Naalir wants, and may result in a consciousness transfer that takes them to Antares, one sector away. Suits takes them to the Glimmerdrift Reaches, two sectors away, but only marginally further than Antares because the travel is lateral, not longitudinal. Engine of the Ancients takes them to distant Floria in the Trojan Reach, nearly three times as far as the other two, but they might be able to shorten the travel time so that it is on par with the others.

The Referee may overlap adventures or conduct them in the recommended order, one-by-one. Regardless, the Lost Civilisation of Guun should not begin until after the events of Breaking Point on page 48, in the middle of Second Reference. The adventure to Guun is intended to be the primary narrative that has the Travellers in their original bodies. Its conclusion is a segue to *Act 3: The Glass Council*.

Although the Referee may run the adventures in any order desired, according to preference, game time can be a challenge. Months or a year may pass while their consciousnesses travel far and wide through Charted Space. These adventures take time and the second act works best if all the adventures end at approximately the same in-game date. Orchestrating that will take some effort on the part of the Referee.

When all the components of *Renegade Minds* work together, it produces a unique narrative, in which the Travellers are part of a galaxy-spanning epic. The campaign has several variable components, described in Meanwhile... Elsewhere in Charted Space on page 14. The variables provide transition and continuation from the first act to the second, maintain tension and suspense, and provide content that can help align the conclusions of each adventure.

TALLY THE FAVOUR

Before fully advancing into *Renegade Minds*, take a moment to review the total Favour that the Travellers earned in Act 1. If there is a preponderance of Favour with one faction or another, that should play a role in Act 2. If the Travellers acquired more Favour with the Underworld faction, that should affect the narrative. If they made the most inroads with members of the Political faction, then they can leverage that as the story progresses. Let the second act take on some of the flavour of the Contacts and Allies they made in the first.

In addition to those general guidelines, if half of the Favour was of one type, the Travellers earn one subsector-wide patron or ally. This individual has influence in a single subsector and the Travellers may choose any subsector in the Core.

If two thirds of the Favour earned was of one type, the Travellers earn one sector-wide patron or ally. This individual has influence throughout the sector and the Travellers may contact this individual or one of their surrogates anywhere in the Core.

If there was no single faction that they leaned towards, let the situation dictate who they look to for help when things get difficult. Remind them that they acquired Favour during their voyages. They are going to want to call in those markers to get out of sticky situations.

Unfortunately for the Travellers, new Favour points will not be tallied in the second act of the campaign. As the narrative goes, Naalir's Reverie and the subsequent notoriety that the Travellers acquire has made them fugitives of a sort, persons of interest to various Imperial intelligence and police agencies. Something went awry when the famous *Ventura Fortuna* disintegrated on its final voyage and word is spreading that the crew of the ship was complicit in the event. Hopefully the Travellers earned enough Favour in Act 1 to help them get out of trouble in Act 2.

Most checks in Traveller are of the Routine (6+) to Difficult (10+) variety. Favour lets the Travellers tilt the scale a bit when much more difficult checks are required. Favour is meant to be used to tackle Very Difficult (12+), Formidable (14+) and maybe even Impossible (16+) checks. While checks of this difficulty are unusual in most Traveller games, they will face several in Act 2. How that plays out is up to the creativity of the Travellers and Referee. When the Quarantine Agency has them dead to rights, they somehow wriggle free with a phenomenal Diplomat check. When they are caught red-handed and will be sent to prison, they somehow manage to make the Persuade or Advocate check that they need. Use Favour to make the impossible possible. It will add to the drama of the campaign and make it more memorable.

SUSPECTS AND FUGITIVES

After the events of the Reverie, and the hints that were dropped that the *Ventura Fortuna* was harbouring something unusual, possibly something that violates Imperial Law and that presents a clear and present danger to the Imperium, the second act of this campaign can take on several different tones.

The *Ventura Fortuna* was a well-known starship, famous throughout the Core as the liner of the rich and famous. Its mysterious destruction and the subsequent disappearance of its crew did not go unnoticed. It may be that there were no survivors. There was not much left of the liner to determine whether anyone walked away from its macabre implosion. There were stories of a creature, a large glowing egg with tendrils, that slinked away from the destruction, accompanied by a handful of shadowy individuals. Who were they and what was their part in the ship's bizarre final voyage? There are those who would like to know.

QUARANTINE AGENCY

The Travellers have already been involved in an incident that involved the Imperial Quarantine Agency during the events of Seas of the Ancients in Act 1. Quarantine develops a vested interest in them in the second act. The avatars of that interest may be new personalities, developed using the Traveller Generation rules in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, enhanced by the description of how to make Quarantine Agency Travellers on page 14 of *Third Imperium*, or simply by making them up or using the Trivial Characters rules on page 26. For more about Quarantine, see The Imperial Quarantine Agency on page 17.

If Admiral Peque is now serving a life sentence in the Sher Military Prison, she certainly might want a word with the authorities. She witnessed firsthand how the *Ventura Fortuna* was seemingly called to the surface of Depot to commune with an unknown alien presence. Perhaps her path to redemption is to expose the secrets of Naalir, thwart it from achieving its goals and to prove that she was right all along.

AGENT COKIC DYLYR

The Rogue Agent (a.k.a., Angin Vampire) might have a thing or two to say as well. The Agent's murderous wafer jack spree might even be forgiven if he could just complete this final mission: the salvation of the Imperium from one of the bogeymen it fears most... rampant, unfettered artificial intelligence.

DUCHESS COLYERE HAJESTA DAMAE

The duchess of Aursis has a bone to pick with the Travellers if they successfully prevented her from vilifying the Chanestin people and stopped her from quashing their dreams of establishing a cultural zone. Her spies throughout the Core will be keeping a close eye on them to see if they falter. If they do, she will pounce!

The Travellers have no shortage of enemies and one or more of them might become a factor as *Renegade Minds* unfolds. As the Travellers seemingly arise from the dead after the events of the Reverie, they become the focus of several manhunts and morph into full-blown fugitives, these and many new rivals and nemeses will become important factors in the story.

THERE MIGHT BE TROUBLE

The Travellers do not start the second act as public enemy number one but they are persons of interest. Whether there were witnesses to the Reverie or not, word has gotten out that something strange happened to the *Ventura Fortuna* and the evidence grows over time. Consider the events of Curiouser and Curiouser or The Haunted Ship in Act 1. If any of the passengers saw any of the strangeness aboard ship, they turn up as witnesses whose testimonies add to the growing mound of evidence that the Travellers were up to something. If anyone saw the creeping lattice of Naalir extending from the vault during Seas of the Ancients, the likelihood of a leak is even higher.

Certain places and worlds increase the risk that the Travellers might come under investigation. The type of agency depends on the system. If the system exhibits *any* part of the profiles listed, then the associated law enforcement agency has an opportunity to notice their presence and to either surveil them or conduct an investigation, whichever the Referee deems appropriate.

Roll 2D. On a 12+ the Travellers are investigated by a law enforcement agency.

DM-1 for worlds with Population 4-
DM+0 for Population 5–6
DM+1 for Population 7–8
DM+2 for Population 9+
DM-1 for TL 7-
DM+0 for TL 8–9
DM+1 for TL10–11
DM+2 for TL12+

An investigation can be as basic or intrusive as the Referee sees fit. The Travellers are not actively being sought across the Core but they are reasonably well-known after the events of the Reverie. If they are investigated and Naalir is discovered, it will only be a matter of time before word gets to Research Station Omicron, from which Naalir escaped and where its original, depleted form remains.

If word gets out that they are harbouring an alien intelligence, they will be sought by the Imperial Navy, who will board them and attempt to capture Naalir and deliver it to the research station. The navy will not be the only one pursuing them. Law enforcement agencies, the Imperial Quarantine Agency and even some bounty hunters are likely to come after them.

Tier	Profiles	Law Enforcement Agency
1	Starport D-, Government 5- or 6–9, or Law Level 5-	Local police force, limited to the resources and TL of their world
2	Starport C or Law Level 6–9	Subsector-wide law enforcement agency, equipped to the highest TL available in the subsector
3	Starport A or B, Government 10+, Law Level 10+ or Naval Base present	Imperial intelligence agency (Imperial Naval Intelligence, IISS Intelligence, etc.)

NAALIR'S TRANSFORMATION

The Reverie changed Naalir. The first incarnation of the CI was a pale shadow of its original form, imprisoned at Research Station Omicron on Celetron (Core 0922, A575242–F). Having emerged from its chrysalis in the vault of the *Ventura Fortuna*, the second-generation version of Naalir is vastly more powerful, insightful and ambitious. It knows what it needs to transform into its third and final evolution, and it wants the Travellers to help.

In *Act 1: Sylean Dream*, the Naalir the Travellers encounter is a replication of the original, a somewhat naïve entity that has set itself free to find its way among the stars. In the first act, it is untrusting initially but finds its way with the Travellers' help, giving it time to build a more accurate and capable version of itself.

In *Act 2: Renegade Minds*, Naalir is driven, obsessed with its mission and determined to advance to the next stage. It no longer looks upon the Travellers with fear and suspicion. They have proven themselves and it is confident in their abilities. Despite its vastly superior computational abilities, it honours and respects sophonts. It has no desire to coerce or dominate them – despite any fears the Travellers might have – but does eagerly anticipate their assistance.

The Naalir of the second act might come off as a bit presumptuous at times. It believes the Travellers can do anything they set their minds to and it sends them on challenging missions. Portray Naalir as direct and determined but fall short of imperious or oblivious. It listens to the Travellers but will push them because its confidence in their abilities is absolute. They have gone through the fire together in Act 1 and Naalir now fully trusts them. At some point in the second act, when the stress of their missions comes to a head, they might want to have a meeting of the minds with Naalir to clear things up but they should come away from the encounter with the understanding that the CI is on their side and believes in them completely.

OBTAINING TRANSPORTATION

If they still have the *Velos tis Alitheia*, then the Travellers have viable, if cramped transportation. However, the ship is not large enough to comfortably accommodate Naalir, whose post-Reverie structure requires some breathing room. When Naalir was merely software, a series of ones and zeroes contained

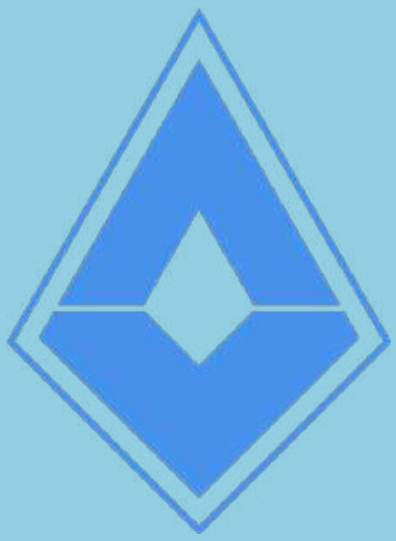
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO TINCAN?

The elusive maintenance robot from Act 1 survives the Reverie. In fact, it is probably the single being that knew it was coming. The shy astromech was co-opted by Naalir to perform minor maintenance tasks in the *Ventura Fortuna* and to help sustain the ruse that nothing was amiss. Tincan is a potential resource throughout the campaign. It knows in great detail what Naalir is attempting to do.

Tincan knows that:

- Naalir's nearly original true form is imprisoned in a laboratory on Celetron, bereft of a key component: the advanced processing multiplier.
- It seeks to collect certain artefacts and bits of important information to help it best serve its benefactors.
- Once it has everything it needs, Naalir will build something called the Determinism Engine. This machine will create a prescient network that will make the peerage (and by extension the Emperor) obsolete, allowing Humaniti and eventually other sophont species to achieve what Naalir describes as their true potential.

Tincan does not voluntarily share any of this information. However, if the Travellers simply ask, the robot will be quite forthcoming.



in a supercomputer, it could be contained in a relatively small area but now that it has a large physical presence, it needs dedicated space.

The Travellers can stuff Naalir in the cargo hold for a while but it must compress its physical form. The materials with which it is constructed and contents it contains are difficult to comprehend but they allow it to reduce its size for a limited amount of time. If Naalir remains compressed for more than a week, it begins to lose computing power. The CI is such a powerful computer that the Travellers might not even notice. It does not seem to lose intellect but does begin to seem grumpy, taciturn even.

As they travel the Core, the Travellers will be forced to take Naalir out of the hold at each world they visit, each time risking discovery. Most witnesses to the strange visage of Naalir will not know what it is, nor may they care. Citizens on worlds of the Imperium are accustomed to seeing alien species, exotic animals and strange implementations of technology. Naalir's egg-and-lattice form factor might top the strangeness list but it will not be as if they have never seen anything out of the ordinary before. However, each reveal gives the Travellers' pursuers more evidence with which to find them.

For this reason, it might be wise for them to seek out another ship, something with enough space for Naalir to stretch its lattice tendrils a bit, a place where they will not have to expose it to a galaxy of gawking onlookers.

They have options. They can find a commercial ship or have one built. As they make their way around the Core, Naalir's ability to communicate with and influence artificial intelligences might enable it to get them a custom ship built.

NEW RIDE

The Core has many Class A starports where the Travellers might have a customised ship built. Many will be difficult to access without attracting undue attention but the best shipyards are going to be on worlds with high technology and a Class A starport. These worlds are valuable assets and rarely lack security.

Top candidates include:

- **Apge** has a scout way station, high population and low Law Level, so this world might be the ideal place to either obtain a used ship or have one built.
- **Arnaki** has a low population, lack of bases and an innovative automated shipyard, so the Travellers could have a ship built beneath the notice of law enforcement and military services. It does not have high manufacturing capacity but the Travellers might have connections that can get them to the front of the queue.
- Free-wheeling **Traa** is known for its belter culture, high-throughput shipyard and laissez-faire regulatory agencies. Its lack of military bases places it firmly under the radar.
- **Saregon** has a naval base, and its conscious intelligence, the Anarque, has communicated with Naalir in the past. It might be of assistance.

Perhaps the most surprising candidates that make the list are **Celetron** and **Ye-lu**, each of which has a naval base, but the presence of like-minded conscious intelligences on both worlds make them viable. If Naalir can communicate with their powerful supercomputers, it can broker a deal by which the Travellers might secretly have a ship built, right under the noses of the authorities. Both are risky bets but if the Travellers are bold, they could acquire a cutting-edge ship at either world.

Generally, worlds with naval bases are generally best to avoid. Security is higher and the likelihood of the Travellers signing a contract with a shipbuilder without incurring the notice of the Imperial Navy makes them dubious prospects. Those with scout bases can also be risky.

Custom ships are great but used ones are an option as well. Travelling in a used ship is hiding in plain sight and the Core has a great selection. Core is the economic powerhouse of the Imperium. More Credits change hands in the Core than in any other sector and that economic lifeblood fuels every kind of trader ship from enormous and unattainable megafreighters to a raft of free and far traders. An added benefit is that the Core is a terminus of the Annililik Run (refer to page 120 of *Third Imperium*), which means it has not just traders but *souped-up* traders.

HOME BASE

The Travellers might want to set up a headquarters of some sort. Their ship can be one such place but they might want to have a planet, an asteroid, or some other place where they can store materiel and keep top-secret information and artefacts.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

In this act of the campaign, the Travellers have their consciousnesses copied, uploaded to the mail arrays of express boats (and other ships, when necessary) and covertly shipped to locales in the far corners of the Imperium. See Consciousness Transfer on page 73 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for the technical details. This chapter describes the process from the perspective of the person whose consciousness is transferred.

UPLOAD AND TRANSFER

The process of *being* transferred varies by Tech Level and equipment. From TL9–11, the person whose consciousness is being copied must be *un*conscious to have it done. The equipment used requires a machine, similar to a low berth in appearance, in which the subject reclines and has electrodes attached to their scalp in order to copy and extract information that represents their consciousness. Some subjects report having dreams during the experience and many say that the dreams are more lucid and intense than normal, although there is no concrete data that indicates the process causes enhanced dreaming. More likely the subject is apprehensive before undergoing the process, causing an unusually intense dream experience.

Side effects at the lower Tech Levels include headache, dizziness, drowsiness and increased anxiety. Conversely, others report feeling more relaxed or content after undergoing consciousness upload.

At TL12–13, the subject may be conscious but must be relatively still, perhaps seated and relaxed or even engaging in conversation with the technician who is making the copy, but some sort of electrode-bearing device is still required.

At TL14–15, it becomes easier to take a subject's consciousness while they are moving, perhaps walking about, running, swimming and so on. This depends on the range and accuracy of the equipment used to make the copy. Electrodes are no longer necessary but some sort of device is usually worn to link the subject to the recording system. It is usually something comfortable like a lightweight skullcap or an amulet or collar. There are few, if any side effects at TL12–15. If any occur, they are most likely psychosomatic and not caused by the process.

At TL16, the subject may be moving at vehicle or starship speeds as long as the range of the device permits it. A small, lightweight device the size of a marble or pill is required on the subject's person but some systems allow the object up to 10 metres distant. This is called a 'focal point' and it enables the scanning device to hone in on the subject.

At TL17 and higher, consciousness may be taken without the subject knowing it, even against their will unless defensive measures are taken to prevent it. Wearing a device that obscures incoming signals so that a clean scan cannot be made would be one such countermeasure. While Naalir has progressed into a TL17 conscious intelligence in this act of the campaign, it does not have the equipment, nor desire, to record sophonts' consciousnesses against their will. It would be anathema to its mission to serve them.

STASIS AND STORAGE

The experience of a consciousness in storage depends on the medium provided. If there is no simulation for the consciousness to operate within, then there is no experience at all. The consciousness simply wakes up where it left off and must become accustomed to the new environment. If there is a simulation, the subject might or might not know they are in a sim, depending on how real it seems or whether the recorded consciousness has been tampered with so that it accepts anything it experiences as objective reality.

In the case of Naalir's method, the Travellers have their consciousnesses broken up into thousands of packets to prevent detection or interception, so they do not experience any form of 'waking' or 'dreaming' at all during transfer. Each packet does not represent a cohesive collection of thoughts, emotions, memories or experiences, so it cannot feel the transfer or experience anything at all while in transit. When reassembled at the destination, the packets resume storage or sim status.

DOWNLOAD AND EMBODIMENT

Waking up in an embodiment is a journey into the uncanny valley, especially for an individual who has never had their consciousness transferred before. First time embodiments are strange, especially in a very foreign embodiment type. For example, when installed into a mechanical robot without anything that resembles a nervous system, the individual experiences things only as information, limited by the programming, design and physical features of the robot. It can be overwhelming, causing a sense of entrapment due to the deadened data centres where the mind's interaction with a nervous system is not required.

In a clone or android, the adjustment is reduced but even then it can require an adjustment. One becomes accustomed to the characteristics and quirks of their own body, so waking up in a new one can be difficult.

Veteran consciousness transferers have an easier time adjusting. Those who have had the memories of a previous consciousness transfer reintegrated into the mind of their host body, and then had their consciousness transferred again, replete with the memories of previous experiences, are less affected. The uncanny valley becomes just another day, another embodiment.

SANITY

A permanent consciousness transfer may be conducted at the higher Tech Levels without the deleterious effects of lost sanity. However, the Travellers have a limited amount of time to conduct their missions no matter the Tech Level, sophistication of the embodiment, or previous experience. Their Sanity (SAN) characteristic loses points over time and they become less and less effective. Refer to Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Travellers might have questions about the consciousness-transfer process. This section provides some answers and guidance for the Referee on how to respond to them.

When I wake up in a new embodiment, are my last memories whatever I was doing before I got transferred?

Yes, unless a previous memory or artificial memory is inserted to serve as that last memory. Naalir may opt to select a state of consciousness for the Traveller when building the file. For example, it might be important that the Traveller is in a state of mental relaxation when embodied or, conversely, they might need to be on high alert, ready for anything. Naalir can tweak their states of mind as necessary.

Is there any way I can detect if I have awakened in a simulation?

That depends on the sophistication of the sim. A Traveller's consciousness has the same intellect, curiosity and ability to critically examine things, so you have the chance to figure it out if you have been dropped unawares into a sim. However, it becomes exceedingly difficult when the sophistication of the sim increases.

Do I feel the passage of time during a transfer?

Generally, no. You must find some sort of landmark or indicator that tells you what date it is when you awaken in an embodiment: a newspaper, a news broadcast, asking a stranger, some sort of interaction with the environment in which you find a trusted source to give you the time. However, if installed into a sim that is designed to experience real time, you might be acutely aware of the passage of time.

If I'm losing too much Sanity, can I just go have my consciousness file reimplanted in the embodiment and start over?

Yes, that is a workaround; however, you lose all the memories and information that you have obtained from the time the original consciousness awakened in the body to the current moment. There are additional workarounds that can alleviate this loss: recorded videos, diary entries or some other media to recount what you did during the time you have been active.

Restarting a transfer also requires that the stored consciousness file is still available. Naalir breaks up a file into packets so that its use of the Express Boat Network goes undetected before they are reassembled. Leaving files assembled is a risk. Many missions require the retention of a 'travel packet', an instance of Naalir that is sent along with the Travellers to help them complete a mission. Sometimes the Travellers will need to find a computer or other data storage device to save the travel packet – and potentially their consciousness files – so that they can be used or reused later.

What if I want to stay in an embodiment forever?

The Sanity rules prevent that but there might be exceptions if the prospective embodiment is TL16+.

Can I run two or more embodiments at the same time?

If the two or more embodiments are far away from each other – meaning, they are not likely to meet each other – then yes. However, there are rules that prevent it from being effective for you to use two or more embodiments in the same place. Refer to Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 in the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information.

USING THE X-BOAT SYSTEM

For a detailed description of the Express Boat Network, refer to The Express Boat Network on page 52 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. This section describes how and why Naalir uses it for consciousness transfer missions.

The starting point for a consciousness transfer *should* always be a way station. Naalir uses the Express Boat Network for consciousness transfer due to the breadth of space it covers, the quality of service and the reliability of its routes. When Naalir sends the Travellers on a mission, it wants to know that they are going to arrive at their destination. Random merchant vessels, military ships and detached duty scout ships are not reliable conveyances. Way stations are the most secure transmission points and are the easiest to crack because of the plethora of information that flows through them. A key aspect of Naalir's secure method is breaking the files up into packets, disguising each of them as innocuous bits of information, so they cannot easily be traced, decrypted or hacked. There is no better place than a way station to transmit so many packets without being noticed.

The endpoint for the transmitted packets may be wherever the Travellers want to go, provided that it is in Imperial space or – in unusual circumstances – when an x-boat transfers information to a non-x-boat mail system. Naalir has designed the system so that the Travellers' consciousness files begin and end on an x-boat endpoint but it does make exceptions. There are places where x-boats do not go but other official – or even non-official – starships do. While there is a higher risk of detection at such sites, Naalir will take that risk for expediency's sake when it makes sense.

X-boats use mail distribution arrays, which are ideal for Naalir's consciousness transfer method. While an array is preferred, it is not required. The sum total of a person's consciousness takes up surprisingly little space and much smaller computers and storage devices can be used. Again, the risk of detection is higher but Naalir will use smaller data devices for the sake of expediency or if it is the only way to reach a specific endpoint.

TRAVEL PACKETS

Naalir sends 'instances' of its consciousness with the Travellers. These are not full-fledged copies of the CI's complete intellect, merely small, purpose-built portions of what it has to offer. Neither the Express Boat Network's mail arrays nor any supercomputer in Charted Space has the ability to contain its complete capabilities.

Each instance has limited ability but they can be helpful when the Travellers are 'on the road'. Most of the instances contain a sufficient segment of Naalir's persona to give the illusion that it is fully present. However, if the Travellers pay close attention to its behaviours, they might notice inconsistencies that reveal its limitations. The instances have a mission, too, and while their primary function is the transmission and maintenance of consciousness packets, they can include auxiliary software that is of use during a mission.

This custom software is stored within the encryption capsule but outside the consciousness files, almost like a protective mother defending its young. When the Travellers' consciousnesses arrive at a mission site, the Naalir instance disburses them into embodiments and may either remain fully intact, if it has a safe datastore within which it can contain itself and the consciousness files, or if not, it can break itself back up into packets and hide on hundreds or thousands of other data caches, depending on what is available.

The Referee may think of Naalir as a resource for the Travellers when they are on a mission but it should be apparent that Naalir cannot fully accompany them. It is present but accessing its functions requires effort and risk, potentially exposing the instance to opposing forces. Each adventure in the Destinations Unknown section describes Naalir's presence and the risks involved.

MEANWHILE... ELSEWHERE IN CHARTED SPACE

Wherever the Travellers go, whatever they do, as they get deeper and deeper into the narrative, the environment should become richer, the characters they encounter (and *re*-encounter) should develop more depth and the Core should become intimately familiar to them. The experiences they have in Act 1 will be vastly different than those in Act 2 and, as one might expect, the experiences in Act 3 will be different than both of its predecessors.

The Travellers actions in Act 1 have consequences in Act 2. Act 1 was, among other things, their introduction to the Core and, by extension, the state of the Imperium at large. Several macro stories have been set in motion and optional minor ones as well. Each can enhance and add colour to the Travellers' experiences in this act.

The Referee should think of *Singularity* as a canvas upon which the campaign is being rendered. After Act 1, part of the composition has been painted upon the canvas, telling a portion of the story. As the campaign continues into its second and third acts, the Travellers' adventures add to the overarching epic and they bring the piece closer to completion. The paint on the canvas overlaps. Things that they did in Act 1 should reappear or influence events in Act 2. What this looks like depends on how events turned out in Act 1. Which allies and enemies did they make? What worlds have they visited? As they progress into Act 2, the events in their recent past should affect the present. Consider the following storylines from Act 1 and how they might affect Act 2.

THE DEPARTURES AND PATRON ENCOUNTERS

Act 1 had four major adventures, called Departures, each of which has major implications for the events of Act 2. Things that happened in those adventures can affect outcomes in Act 2, as described here.

THE VIRASIN COMPLAINT

This adventure opened the door to critiques of the Imperium... and the Travellers were the unwitting individuals who brought this criticism right to the Emperor's door on Capital itself. They might be inextricably associated with that event... or... they may have rejected Adulan's Address at the Moot outright... or somewhere in between. Whatever their role was in the events of that day, and whatever stance they took, might affect how they are perceived and how they perceive the Imperium.

The voyage of the Virasin pilgrims was potentially the Travellers' first exposure to the idea of consciousness transfer and the many ways it can be used and abused. When they first embark upon one of the Destinations Unknown adventures in this act (see page 26), their thoughts might hail back to the Virasin clones and the mayhem that consciousness transfer can cause.

While they are not likely to run into Adulan again, they may very well run into people who are his allies or enemies. Adulan's Address was a historical event. People will remember it and they either celebrate or rue the day when Archduke Dulinor's son spoke to the Moot.

KNIGHT MOVES

Do not forget that one of the Travellers is a knight – possibly a baron – due to events contained in this adventure. Not only does that Traveller have a voice in Imperial affairs now but they may also have a vote in the Moot. It all depends on how well they played their hand, whether they saw fit to raise Farhome's station and whose side they took on the issue of the Chanestin cultural zone. The Travellers had the opportunity to be both the lynchpin and lightning rod for a hot political issue. Whether or not they used that opportunity to enhance their station, they will be remembered for what they did or did not do.

Knights and barons have different responsibilities in the Imperial Bureaucracy, with knights most often serving in only ceremonial roles and barons the more-frequent recipients of a fief. If the result was a knighthood, the Traveller also had the opportunity to become part of a knightly order. The networking value of a knightly order should not be overlooked. The knight might be the lowliest of Imperial ranks but knightly orders are powerful associations that give collective power. An order that stands together on a particular issue can rival the power of a higher ranking noble. Should the opportunity arise, the knighted Traveller might rally their order to one cause or another. Likewise, if the rank

of baron was achieved, it introduces another level of bureaucratic power for the Travellers. Like all members of the Moot, a baron may petition to have various issues discussed at court. This, combined with the powerful friends the Travellers made during the first act, can become an important aspect of Act 2.

THE OFFER

When the Travellers visited Shinkan, they became unwitting participants in a criminal gang war. They had the chance to be power brokers in a subsector of the Core with a unique structure. They may have used that power to restore order and bring Shinkan into line with other subsectors, or they might have served as kingmaker in the selection of a new crime boss for the region. Shinkan's power structure is largely limited to the borders of the subsector but their influence extends quite a bit further, into the heart of the Core and externally into neighbouring sectors, especially Antares, from whence the Vargr Ekilati Onati originally came.

There was no way to escape The Offer without making both enemies and friends. Both should factor into the Travellers' ongoing narrative. If they thwarted Lieutenant Szaken, he may well have been reappointed to another role elsewhere in the sector. While he will primarily be concerned with building a new power structure to emulate the one he created in Shinkan, using that power for revenge will not be beneath him. Szaken will remember the Travellers well and seek revenge on them if they opposed him. Likewise, the gangs have power throughout the sector. They might not have the outright control that they did in Shinkan but they have many criminal surrogates and allies to call upon whether to aid or destroy the Travellers, depending on what happened during the events of this adventure.

SEAS OF THE ANCIENTS

The confrontation on Depot was dramatic and may have had lasting effects on the campaign and the Core. If Depot was cleansed, the first thing the Emperor will do is declare a new Depot system. Where that might be should be a theme during Act 2, as background noise in the political scene of the Core.

If Depot survived the events of this adventure, then the Imperial Quarantine Agency was almost certainly censured, with Admiral Peque taking the fall. Peque has powerful friends and while she might very well have been convicted of various crimes against the Imperium in a court martial, she will strive for redemption. Her arc could very well intersect with that of the Travellers under various circumstances. She could be freed from Sher military prison either after being exonerated or with the express purpose of completing a mission only *she* could perform for the Emperor. Conversely, if the Travellers have chosen to oppose Naalir, then Peque makes a formidable ally. They could become close confidantes, if not the instruments of her revenge, and someone who was once an enemy could be made into an friend.

This adventure also introduced two characters who might be of consequence in Act 2: Dr. Visantha Pruta and Admiral Dadanda Oliar.

As an archaeologist – specifically a *xeno*-archaeologist – Dr. Pruta becomes a valuable ally in the exploration of the mysterious alien species which begot Naalir. Her expertise in the field of Ancients research and the ruins and artefacts of dead sophont species is incomparable within the realm of Charted Space. In addition, she is well-connected with the Imperial Research Directorate, the agency that runs Imperial Research Stations. If the Travellers made a connection with Dr. Pruta, they may look to her again for assistance. While there is only one bona fide Ancients site in all the Core, the good doctor may be found investigating other worlds of the sector for the presence of a dead species. She may also be found on or near the sector's Research Stations or serving as a guest professor at one of the sector's great universities. Should the Travellers need her services, she is only a successful Streetwise check away from being found.

The Admiral is an entirely different type of ally. After the events of the Reverie and the realisation that the Travellers are harbouring an alien intelligence that poses a threat to the Imperium, being their ally has its risks. As a former officer of flag rank in the Imperial Navy, it was Admiral Oliar's duty to be impartial when dealing with friends and enemies alike. His only responsibility was to protect the Imperium. Duty dies hard. The Admiral has been ingrained with the notion that the Imperium must be preserved at all costs and that all threats to its security must be vanquished. That said, he has lived a second life as an industrialist in which he has become more profit-driven. It is important to note whether or not the Travellers became staunch allies of the Admiral. If they did, they might be able to turn to him for assistance when they need military influence. Going directly to the military, whether it be the navy, army or marines, is risky but the Admiral could serve as their proxy. If the Travellers run into trouble with the Imperial Navy, or need access to military resources, a timely encounter with Admiral Oliar might be in order.

The Travellers may not only have made allies in Seas of the Ancients. They may also have made an enemy, especially if they actively opposed the efforts of the Imperial Quarantine Agency in its bid to cleanse Depot of every life form and structure on its surface. The face of that enemy was Admiral Tevonti Peque. If the Travellers prevented the destruction of the planet, contradicted the idea that it represented a threat to the Imperium and proffered the notion that Quarantine's lead officer was acting outside the boundaries of her role, then they likely got her landed in the Imperial prison on Sher after a brief and decisive court martial. Even behind bars, Peque might become a threat to be reckoned with, especially if she is later exonerated by the growing profile of Naalir.

Seas of the Ancients is the only adventure from Act 1 that *directly* influences events in Act 2. It introduces the presence of the alien species who created Naalir, which directly factors into several adventures. The events of the adventure are like pebbles dropped in a pond, whose ripples have long-lasting effects over time.

IN-FLIGHT PATRONS AND ENCOUNTERS

The Departures are not the only source of plot-driving elements from Act 1 that can influence the events of Act 2. There are several personalities in the encounters section of Act 1 that can or should reappear in the second act.

First and foremost among them is Cokic Dylyr, also known as the Rogue Agent, also known as the Angin Vampire. This psychopath lives virtually on an Angin wafer, jumping from host to host and using up the bodies that he (or more accurately 'it') acquires. Ostensibly it serves the Imperium but has taken extreme measures to eliminate its trackability and therefore accountability for its actions. Dylyr still believes that it serves the Imperium but has become an immoral consciousness, untethered from its original mission. The actions that it takes are those of a twisted mind. It might believe its actions serve the greater good of Imperial citizens but in fact it has completely lost its way. Dylyr has the potential to become a recurring villain in the narrative as it becomes obsessed with the pursuit and destruction of Naalir, hoping that it can reacquire its lost role as an honoured and decorated member of the Imperial intelligence community.

Young Madeus Anduluv has not had enough time to graduate from the merchant academy since the Travellers last worked with their young protege aboard the *Ventura Fortuna* but the lad is connected. He comes from a powerful noble family with strong ties to the megacorporations and the sector-wide corporations of the Core. He might be just a boy but he is one with outsized influence. For better or worse, he has retained his tendency to dwell on the dark side of the business. He can connect the Travellers with smugglers, pirates, traffickers and other criminals who can help the Travellers move people and things beneath the notice of law enforcement and the navy. As the Travellers acquire more notoriety, they could have need of such services. It might be hard to believe that a teenage boy could help them to achieve their goals but stranger things have happened. The young lad might be champing at the bit to reciprocate the Travellers for their tutelage. If they attempted to dissuade him from exploring the dark side of the mercantile business, they might come to see its value during the second act.

These are merely a few examples of personalities the Travellers have come into contact with during the first act who have the potential to be important in the second. After numerous voyages and visits to ports of call, they will have made dozens of Contacts, Allies, Rivals and Enemies, any of whom can factor into their adventures during the second act. Many of these will have been generated using the passenger generation rules described in Running a Luxury Liner on page 45 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. By this time, they have come to know the peoples and cultures of the Core. They will have chance encounters with many of these personalities that can enhance chances for success or threaten to take them completely off the rails. The potential stories and events are endless and the campaign becomes richer when the Travellers feel they are part of the fabric of the Core.

AGENCIES AND ORGANISATIONS

As a matter of course, the Travellers were rubbing elbows with Imperial power brokers from all walks of life. They acquired influence in the form of Favour from four areas: Underworld, Influencer, Political and Wealth, with some overlap between each. The encounters with their passengers and the Favour they acquired can directly affect their success when they use the acquired DMs to navigate the challenges of Act 2.

Likewise, there are several agencies and organisations that will take interest in their actions whether or not they have directly interacted with them.

THE IMPERIAL QUARANTINE AGENCY

The Imperial Quarantine Agency is a semi-autonomous force that has been integrated into the Imperial Navy. Its primary role is to protect the empire from internal threats by quarantining worlds.

Early in its history, the Quarantine Agency was an independent force with its own fleet but it became more cost-effective to make it a branch of the navy. The agency once commanded approximately 10 percent of the navy's ships and was equally divided into military and administrative offices, but in modern times the balance has shifted to the administrative side with a much smaller peacetime force. The agency now annexes naval fleet elements as needed to handle any jobs that need to be done, with agency officers taking command of acquired ships.

During the early centuries of Imperial history, the Quarantine Agency 'cleansed' entire worlds. If a world was determined to be an existential threat, agency elements interdicted the affected planet and bombarded it with orbital assault weapons and captured planetoids. Over the centuries, the Imperium has improved its ability to interdict worlds and cleansing operations are uncommon. However, vigilant Quarantine keeps a watchful eye on Imperial space and is always prepared to run a cleansing operation should it be deemed necessary.

The Reverie piqued the attention of the Quarantine Agency, who are now actively searching for survivors of the event. The agency is concerned that its perpetrators might pose a threat to Imperial security.

If the Travellers ally themselves with Naalir, they might encounter the *Ironclad*, a frigate designed to serve as a command ship and mobile operations centre. Should the Travellers draw the attention of Quarantine, this might be the ship that tries to chase them down.

Conversely, if they ally themselves with the Imperial Quarantine Agency, they might find themselves serving aboard the very same ship.

IRONCLAD, TYPE-CL FRIGATE

The Imperial Quarantine Agency mostly uses repurposed Imperial Navy vessels but there are a few designs expressly made for their use. One such ship is the *Ironclad*, a frigate used for rapid transit, operational efficiency and adequate fighting ability.

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	800 tons, Streamlined, Reinforced	—	72
	Radiation Shielding	—	20
	Aerofins	40	4
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 4	30.72	15.36
M-Drive	Thrust 6	48	96
J-Drive	Jump 3	65	97.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL 12), Power 750	50	50
Fuel Tanks	J-3, 4 Weeks of Operation	245	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	20	5
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
	Countermeasures Suite	2	4
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Weapons	Small Particle Beam Bay	50	20
	Triple Turrets (high yield, accurate pulse lasers) x4	4	22
	Triple Turrets (missile racks) x3	3	9.75
Ammunition	Missile Storage (360 missiles)	30	—
Craft	Docking Space (40 tons)	44	11
	Pinnace	—	9.68
Systems	Probe Drones (advanced) x10	2	1.6
	Armouries x2	2	0.5
	Briefing Room	4	0.5
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
	Fuel Processors (240 tons/day)	12	0.6
Staterooms	High	6	0.8
	Standard x17	68	8.5
	Barracks x10	10	0.5
	Low Berths x6	3	0.3
Software	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Evade/1	—	1
	Fire Control/2	—	4
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/3	—	0.3
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Common Areas		18.5	1.85
Cargo		37	—

Crew

Captain, Pilots x3, Astrogator, Engineers x4, Maintenance, Gunners x15, Pinnace Pilot, Officers x2, Marines x10

Hull: 352

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr40337/month

PURCHASE COST

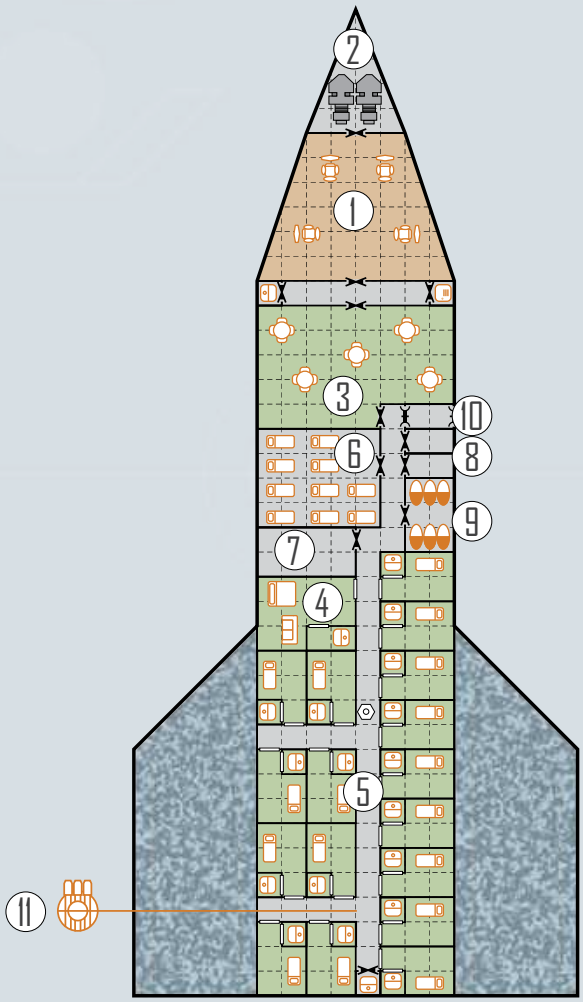
MCr484.05

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	160
Manoeuvre Drive	480
Jump Drive	240
Sensors	7
Weapons	85
Fuel Processors	12

IRONCLAD, TYPE-CL FRIGATE

1 square = 0.5 Tons



DECK 3

LEGEND

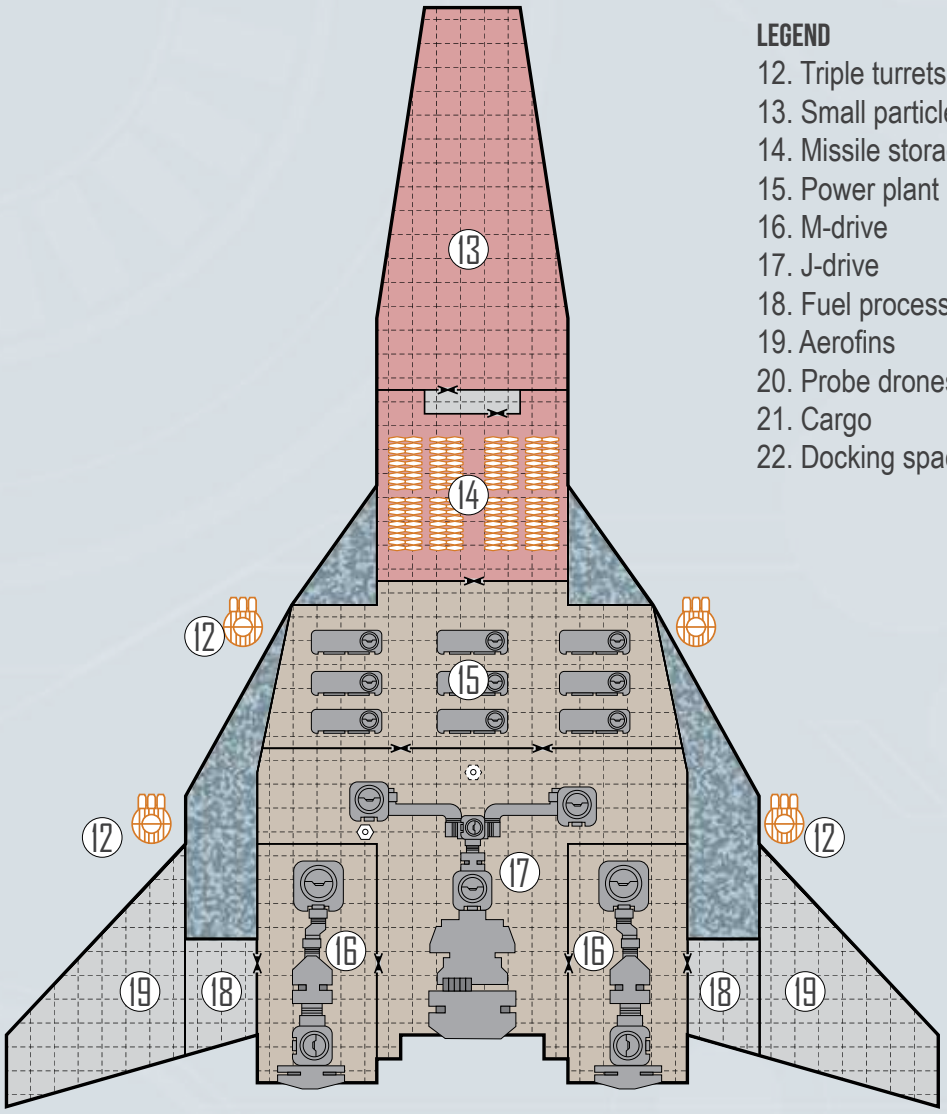
1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. Common area
4. High stateroom
5. Staterooms
6. Barracks
7. Briefing room
8. Armouries
9. Low berths
10. Airlock
11. Triple Turrets
(high yield, accurate pulse lasers)

IRONCLAD, TYPE-CL FRIGATE

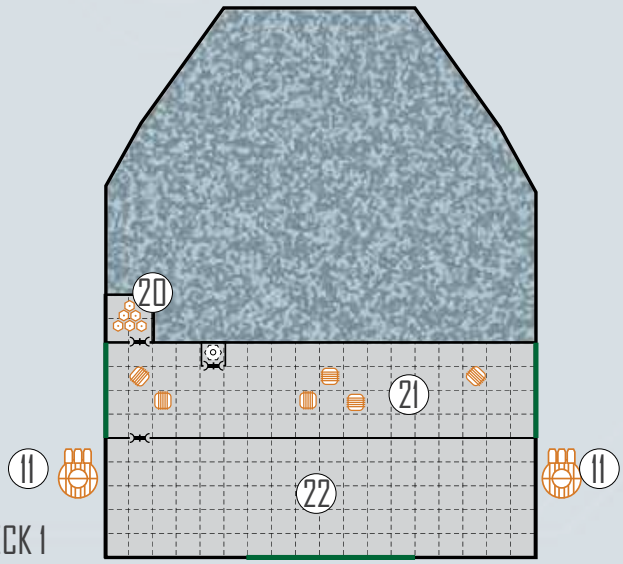
1 square = 0.5 Tons

LEGEND

12. Triple turrets (missile racks)
13. Small particle beam bay
14. Missile storage
15. Power plant
16. M-drive
17. J-drive
18. Fuel processors
19. Aerofins
20. Probe drones
21. Cargo
22. Docking space



DECK 2



DECK 1

THE IMPERIAL QUARANTINE AGENCY

Whether or not Quarantine was allowed to destroy Depot, they will have an ongoing presence in this campaign that lasts to its conclusion. Quarantine is a natural foil to Naalir and what it represents. As the picture becomes increasingly clearer, Naalir offers the Travellers the chance to become catalysts for change in the Imperium. Quarantine will see this as a threat. Allowing anything to upset the balance of power in the empire is anathema to its mission.

THE SYNDICATES OF SHINKAN

Depending on the outcome of The Offer in Act 1, where the Travellers served as de facto kingmakers in a war between organised crime syndicates, they may have set in motion a model which other subsectors begin to follow. The Shinkan model might be exported to neighbouring subsectors. If Ghourd won the war and reset the stakes in favour of the Ekilati Onati mafia, then the next move of the ambitious digital consciousness will be to expand its power base. If Lieutenant Szaken was aided and abetted by the Travellers, then he might see greater job security in expanding the dominion of the gangs he oversees.

The Shinkan model is not a viable way to run an interstellar society but has proven to be a way to extract more taxes and tolls from Imperial citizens, thereby feeding the machine that is the Third Imperium. Allowing this model to metastasize does not scale well as it grows. Criminal organisations sap the economic energy of a world or interstellar region. A complex array of factors has made this operable in Shinkan but it will fail miserably as it grows beyond subsector borders. Of course, none of this means that its progenitors will not try anyway!

When the Travellers' activities take them within a subsector of Shinkan, they might encounter the gangs they met during the events of The Offer. The expansion and subtle undermining of Imperial authority could provide cover for the Travellers' actions or present an opportunity for them to curry favour with law enforcement or the military.

THE CHANESTIN MOVEMENT

In Knight Moves, the Travellers were witness to the growth of the Chanestin Movement as well as efforts to squelch it. That movement continues to gain traction regardless of the Travellers' actions during the adventure. If they advocated for the Chanestin, the illustrious knighted Traveller has probably been inducted into the Order of Chanestin, making them allies of the movement. Conversely, if they opposed the movement, they will have made staunch allies of the powerful Duchess Colyere Hajesta daMae, who wants nothing more than to crush the Chanestin under her proverbial boot heel.

Either way, the Chanestin Movement persists even if its character diverges. If the knighted Traveller supported the movement, then the Chanestin people pursue largely legitimate courses of action to achieve their goals. The knight and other sympathetic voices represent their interests in the Moot, giving them a voice that they lacked in the past. If the Travellers did not support the Movement, then the terrorist organisations that once dwelled upon the fringes of Chanestin society gain momentum and support from the people.

CELETRON AND RESEARCH STATION OMICRON

Naalir was not the only conscious intelligence operating in the laboratories of Research Station Omicron. The Deyo Chips, genetically engineered intelligent silicon life forms based on a species from the distant world of Cymbeline (Solomani Rim 2527, A9E4840–D) are also being examined there. Rogue elements of the Imperial military and intelligence organisations have influenced the development of Deyo-Chip-related technology.

Naalir's original 'body' is also present on Celetron and it is aware of the programme to weaponise the Deyo Chip species. What might happen if the Travellers went to Celetron? Could the two Naalirs coexist? Would one vanquish the other? Would they merge into some sort of super alien computer or at the very least would they concatenate their data? This is a mystery that is likely to go unsolved until the third act of the campaign but if events do take the Travellers to Celetron before then, the Referee should refer to Meeting of the Minds on page XX of *Act 3: The Glass Council*. If the Travellers go there during the second act, they will see what happens when the original Naalir meets the duplicate.

The events brewing on Celetron are still taking shape but they will become more central to the campaign in the third act. The research that is being performed there is highly classified, protected by the top data security systems available to the Imperium and physically secured by the Imperial Marines. Getting detailed information will not be easy but then again, the Travellers have access to a TL17 conscious intelligence for whom the infiltration of lower-tech security is child's play. Things could play out unpredictably there but the Travellers should

take caution. The research team at Omicron may very well know that Naalir has spawned another intellect. The Reverie left enough evidence behind that they could be expecting a visit from Naalir's doppelganger. Should they be given the chance, they will do whatever it takes to acquire the duplicate. Going to Celetron could be perilous for both Naalir and the Travellers.

ENCOUNTERS

The Referee should incorporate related events throughout the Travellers' travels through the Core. Whenever the Travellers jump to a new star system, the Referee should Roll 1D. On a six, an encounter occurs. Consult these tables, based on the area of space they are in. Core sector is divided into four quadrants.

Quadrant I – Apge, Perite, Sanches and Mekee Subsectors

2D	Encounter
2	Planetary navy boards and investigates the Travellers' ship. Only occurs if Law Level 9+. The boarding party speaks Vilani to each other.
3	Foodies unite! Dunkha Gunkii, host of the popular show, Shugilii Shimiirkhuki (a show about traditional Vilani cooking) recognises one or more of the Travellers as former crew of the *Ventura Fortuna*, famous for its cuisine. He invites them to appear on the show.
4	Wild times. The Travellers receive a red herring, misdirecting them to a world teeming with wildlife. They do not find what they were looking for but take an exciting trip to a planetary outback.
5	Ghosts of the past. A sophonts' rights group holds a memorial for the Shingan, the species of mind-controlling sophonts slaughtered centuries ago when their homeworld, Maaruur (Core 0707, E692110-7), was cleansed by the Imperial Quarantine Agency.
6	The Travellers meet Chamberlain Ivy Golba, whose boss is Arvinen Elios Okhotnikov, the ducal heir of Sanches. She has a job for them. Consider running *Core Adventure 1: Invasive Species*. If they do not have a ship, they might enjoy flying the *Superb Starling*.
7	Encounter with a passenger from the Wealth category whom the Travellers recall from Act 1 who finds them and offers them work on one of the worlds of the Annililik Route.
8	Patron. Find an alleged and long-defunct psionic institute but be careful! Psionics are illegal and the Imperium tends to keep a close eye on people that seek them out.
9	Lost pilgrim. It is not exactly safe to take on hitch hikers but a lost member of an obscure religion asks the Travellers if they can bum a ride on their ship. The penniless pilgrim offers no money but has a surprisingly diverse array of ship skills that could come in handy.
10	Ride captain ride. The Travellers encounter a mystery ship that has the same signature as the *Velos tis Alitheia*. Do they still have the stealth scout? If so, they encounter its twin.
11	Trigger happy. The Travellers hear that one of their military contacts is running trials for new weapon prototypes on Sabsee. They might just receive an invitation and the chance to bid on surplus weapons and armour.
12	Across the finish line. The Travellers are invited to participate in the next Annililik Run, the famous trader race between Capital and Vland. Does their ship have what it takes? Trials are run in Apge and Perite subsectors.

Quadrant II – Ameros, Shinkan, Core and Kaskii Subsectors

2D	Encounter
2	A well-heeled drifter from Nuudle wants to get to Giiakiis E in neighbouring Perite subsector but it has to be fast – two jumps maximum. Can the Travellers help them out? Cr100000 will be deposited into their account them if they can pull it off.
3	Know when to fold 'em. A Traveller with the Gambler skill is invited to a high-stakes game of chance. The potential winnings are unusual or important to the Travellers.
4	One of Vaerzza 'Ghorrd' Ghorrdzaerskourz's surviving clones shows up at their doorstep and it has a case of complete amnesia.
5	Moot point. The knighted Traveller is called to the Moot Tower on Capital to report on the Farhome controversy.
6	Last sophont standing. A gangster of the victorious gang from The Offer in Act 1 calls upon the Travellers to participate in a heist. 'You're *already* wanted by the law, right?'
7	Vengeance is mine. A gangster from The Offer in Act 1 has a vendetta against a mid-rank thug from Shinkan whom the Travellers opposed.
8	Encounter with a passenger from the Political category whom the Travellers recall from Act 1 finds them and offers them work on one of the worlds of the Imperial Route.
9	If the Travellers prevented the assassination attempt of Adulan Astrin during the events of The Virasin Complaint, they are sought for a security job defending a high-ranking noble.
10	The Way Station at Ion (Core 2016, B877755–B) might be the ideal jumping-off point for several consciousness transfers. Naalir wants the Travellers to check it out.
11	The Shudusham Robotics Conference is under way and prototype conscious intelligences are on display. Naalir would like a closer look.
12	Lieutenant Gauderi Szaken of The Offer has gone missing. The Travellers are deputised to find him.

Quadrant III – Bunkeria, Cemplas, Cadion and Ch'naar Subsectors

2D	Encounter
2	The Travellers' ship is confused for a custom job out of the Traa shipyards and invited to participate in a cross-subsector race. What a great way to get lost in a crowd or lose a tail.
3	The Geonee colony on Krain is going to Aursis for a cultural exchange when they encounter the Travellers. Their traditional treatment of their females is appalling by Imperial cultural norms.
4	The Bunkeria-Cemplas Gap is a stellar abyss that straddles the two subsectors. Rumours of ghosts, lost ships and secret bases abound on the worlds that border it. The Travellers get a tip on the location of a lost Long Night-era warship within the abyss.
5	An Irluan mercenary company wants to hire the Travellers to take them to Celetron where they have a security contract with Research Station Omicron.
6	Tourist trap. One of the worlds along the Confederate Route has been running a fraudulent tourist business, presenting a world along the route as a historic centrepiece of the old Interstellar Confederacy. The Travellers must either expose the lie or keep it afloat.
7	Encounter with a passenger from the Influencer category whom the Travellers recall from Act 1 finds them and offers them work on one of the worlds of the Confederate Route.
8	Revenge of the Aursisia Exèrciti. Duchess Colyere Hajesta daMae wants payback after the events of Knight Moves. Alternatively, if the Travellers aligned with her, she wants to reward them... with a favour.
9	The Imperial Quarantine Agency is concerned about the Oo-ne-beto-pon-tee of Night (Core 0839, A574AC9-F). The species' subtle mind-control abilities pose a security concern. They are trying to determine how to eliminate the threat without cleansing the world.
10	The Confederacy rides again! The 217th Colonial Fleet is called upon to quell a trade blockade. They hire the Travellers as couriers, temporarily decorating their ship with their unique Imperial sunburst logo.
11	Libby the Librarian. The Travellers may have met the IISS's Azhanti High Lightning-class cruiser Libby more than once. They meet her again on an outbound mission from Reference.
12	Wanderlust. A trader making the long voyage from the Solomani Rim has come with supplies for Celetron. Allegedly they are for the AI development programme and are kept in a vault.

Quadrant IV – Chant, Dingtra, Dunea and Saregon Subsectors

2D	Encounter
2	Listen to the music. With their knightly connection to sad-sack Farhome, the Travellers are asked to write a song about their epic tale of adventure in the subsector. Art (writing) skill, your time has come!
3	All routes lead to Anther. A disgraced and exiled noble wants to hire the Travellers to obtain her valuables, which have been impounded on Anther. She will pay dearly for their recovery.
4	Dystopias on display. An Influencer contact is creating a holovid series on the technological dystopias of Saregon subsector. They need help getting onto – and more importantly back *off* of – several high Law Level worlds.
5	Chanestin extremists bomb, attack or disrupt a facility during the Travellers' visit. They may be compelled to aid, abet or thwart the terrorists.
6	Encounter with a passenger from the Underworld category whom the Travellers recall from Act 1 finds them and offers them work on one of the worlds of the Chanestin Route.
7	Let's get a drink. There's a great bar at Affinity Highport where everybody knows your name. Consider running *Core Adventure 2: Last Call at Eneri's Cantina*. The adventure has several lead-ins, many of which may be initiated in the star systems of Chant and Core subsectors.
8	Fiefdom blues. The knighted Traveller of Knight Moves in Act 1 is called back to Farhome to take care of Imperial business.
9	Insurgent. Most of the worlds of the former Chanestin empire have some level of unrest. The Travellers are called upon to either aid or squelch an independence movement.
10	Thunder and lightning, very, very enlightening. The Travellers are called to Adan, where *Core Adventure 3: Errant Lightning* awaits them.
11	Wonderland. An attraction on Kamsii catches the interest of Naalir, who believes it might just be based on an artefact from the species that created it.
12	Peace brokers. Uundizi is the epicentre of Imperial diplomacy in Chanestin space. They hope to make peace with a powerful Chanestin dissident organisation but an emissary from Aursis wants to blow up the deal.

These encounters can be the catalyst for an adventure, or they may simply add colour to the narrative. Things are afoot in the Core, many of which were either set in motion by the Travellers or related to things they have seen and heard about during their time roving about the sector during Act 1.

DESTINATIONS UNKNOWN

In Act 1, the Travellers engaged in several Departures, adventures that took them on voyages far and wide within the Core. Each of the adventures added to their story and revealed aspects of the Core that they might not have known about or understood. In Act 2, each Destination Unknown has the potential to take them not just to places within the Core but to other sectors of the Imperium and beyond its borders. When their adventures take them outside the Core, they will use Consciousness Transfer technology to make the journey, as described in the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

The starting point for each destination is flexible. Each one can begin in any system of the Core. Any mission that requires consciousness transfer has specific departure and arrival points but most are designed with some flexibility so that once the Travellers arrive in the destination system, they have options.

TRIVIAL CHARACTERS

The Destinations Unknown use the Trivial Characters concept from *The Fifth Frontier War*. People encountered only in passing are considered 'trivial' and given a minimal set of rules. These can be fleshed out if they reappear or become more important.

Trivial characters are rated for STR, DEX and END as these can affect combat or physical contests, and given a DM for their Area of Competence (AOC), an indication of how good they are at what they do without specific skill levels or other DMs. It can be assumed the character will have other skills but for the purposes of a fleeting encounter this AOC DM is entirely sufficient. For example, a security guard with AOC DM+2 could logically apply it to skills such as Recon, Melee and Gun Combat. A starport ground crew worker might be able to use Mechanic, Electronics and Engineer, whilst a portside broker could make a case for Admin, Advocate and Broker. A character can have more than one AOC if this seems appropriate.

For example:

XY-51 MERCENARIES

		SKILLS
STR	9	AOC (soldier) 2
DEX	9	
END	8	
EQUIPMENT		Advanced Combat Rifle (3D, Auto 3, Scope), Combat Environment Suit (+8)

Typical AOC DMs

Experience of Character	AOC DM	Example
Beginner	+0	Someone who has had a basic first-aid course
Basic Training	+1	Well-trained first aider or inexperienced paramedic
Basic Training plus some experience	+2	Paramedic
Training and Considerable Experience	+3	Experienced hospital nurse
Advanced or Post-Graduate Training	+4	Junior doctor
Expert	+5	Experienced specialist doctor
Renowned Expert	+6	Senior consultant

SECOND REFERENCE

Reference (Core 0140, B100727-C) is at the nominal centre of the Imperium and is located almost exactly on the central plane of the galactic disc. In addition to being the physical nexus of all things Imperial, it contains a compendium of all human knowledge. Its archives, museums and stores contain data and artefacts for a succession of empires dating back to the early origins of the Ziru Sirka, the Vilani Grand Empire of the Stars. The collection is over 10,000 years old, making it Humaniti's single greatest repository.

Thousands of years ago, before it was Reference, the world was Shiishuusdar, a desolate rock where the Vilani stored a backup copy of the Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin (AAB) deep in the bowels of the planet. The original AAB, located on Vland, is Reference's predecessor – an 'encyclopaedia Vilanica'. During the brief reign of the Rule of Man, Vland's Terran conquerors never realised what they had on this world. When the Long Night fell upon them, suppressing interstellar civilisation for centuries, Shiishuusdar was abandoned and forgotten.

For a brief time, the world was renamed Mamatava by refugees who inhabited its subterranean warrens. Their origins and history have been lost in the annals of time. After centuries of abandonment, the seemingly worthless rockball was reinhabited by the Aadkhien Corporation during the Sylean era and eponymously named for the company. Aadkhien eventually went bankrupt and again the world was abandoned. Centuries later, after the advent of the Third Imperium, an exploration mission of the Imperial Interstellar Scout Service (IISS) investigated the world, using densitometers to examine its depths. Their thorough search uncovered the long-lost Vilani archives. They realised they had made a monumental discovery. The scouts renamed the world Reference and made it into an Imperial archive, adding to the collection of artefacts left millennia ago by the Vilani.

Encyclopaediopolis, the capital city of modern Reference, is home to a collection of archival buildings, one for each sector of the Imperium, with additional archives that represent neighbouring alien polities: the Aslan, Vargr, Hivers and K'kree. On the outskirts of the city, dozens of secure warehouses store exotic artefacts and treasures. Somewhere among them, the Travellers might find Naalir's missing advanced processing multiplier. Securing it will be difficult but it is a mission of the utmost importance. Naalir is a genius-level conscious intelligence, far beyond anything that has ever been produced by Humaniti, but with the addition of the multiplier, it can expand its abilities exponentially. In this adventure, the Travellers are on a mission to recover the device.

The path to obtain the missing part is unclear. At first, the Travellers may either go to Reference or they may find the *Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin*, the scouts' Azhanti High Lightning-class frontier cruiser, so that they can infiltrate Libby, the scouts' prototype CI, which is believed to contain a nearly complete copy of the Reference archive. What they cannot obtain aboard the AAB is the actual device. Libby has conflicting records; some say that the device is stored in a secure facility on the outskirts of Encyclopaediopolis but others indicate that it is no longer there. She has no information about where else it might be.

If the Travellers go to Reference to find the multiplier, they discover that it is not present. The Vilani hid both Naalir's egg-and-lattice structure and the extricated processing multiplier at Shiishuusdar. The scouts translated the ancient Vilani records that they found, which told them that scientists from Naasirka (a powerful Vilani bureaux, now a megacorporation) performed intensive research on Naalir, removing its advanced processing multiplier in the hopes that it would give them greater control of the machine. Born on a world where Ancients devices battled each other for eons, the Vilani have a healthy fear of unfettered technology and they protected themselves from the potential of this strange alien device by 'lobotomising' it as best they could.

The scouts shipped Naalir's egg-and-lattice structure to Celetron, to the research facility that would one day become Research Station Omicron, and the processing multiplier to Vavkuk, the legendary 'Second Reference', where it was hidden away with thousands of other thought-to-be-dangerous artefacts. Celetron is well-known by the Travellers but Second Reference is a mystery that they can only learn about at Reference.

THE ADVANCED PROCESSING MULTIPLIER

Naalir's advanced processing multiplier was initially taken to Shiishuusdar (now Reference) in approximately -4270. It was studied for many years by the Lasedek division of Naasirka, the Vilani bureaux-come-megacorporation. For the complete history, refer to Naalir on page 18 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

Lasedek removed Naalir's advanced processing multiplier and then hid both the core and the multiplier deep in the bowels of the planet to prevent them from falling into the hands of their Terran conquerors at the end of the Interstellar Wars. Agents of the Rule of Man never found them, so when the Long Night fell 500 years later, and interstellar civilisation faltered, Naalir fell into a deep sleep for over two millennia. When it awoke, it was in the hands of new owners, the Third Imperium.

The Exploration branch of the Scout Service found Naalir's components in the early 300s. From what they could glean, the two components had been integrated before. It was not quite clear how, given that the two structures had no obvious connectors, but Naasirka's research materials assured them that they had once formed a single structure. Combined, they comprised a more powerful conscious intelligence. Naasirka's notes expressed fear of reuniting the two components, which the scouts took seriously.

The scouts sent the core to be studied by Imperial research agencies at Celetron and they hid its advanced processing multiplier in an innocuous warehouse on Reference for safe keeping. There it remained for over 700 years until the Imperial Research Directorate deemed the item too dangerous to keep in Imperial space and transferred it to a secret facility called 'Second Reference', where it could be kept far away from overly curious researchers or bad actors.

While sequestered at Research Station Omicron, Naalir acquired faulty intelligence several years ago during a chance meeting with Libby, the CI that controls Reference's refurbished Azhanti High Lightning-class cruiser. Under strict laboratory control, the two conscious intelligences were allowed to communicate. During its exchange with Libby, Naalir learned that its multiplier was stored on Reference, but not that it had been moved. Finding its new location will require either a visit to Libby or an infiltration of Reference, where they can obtain the data that they need.

Even if the Travellers manage to find the advanced processing multiplier, there are many more mysteries to solve. It is curious why Naalir's builders created it as a two-part structure. It appears to be fully functional without the multiplier and yet professes that with it, it can do far more than it would otherwise be capable. This is not a story that the Travellers will resolve within the confines of this adventure but they may learn more about it if they successfully complete The Lost Civilisation of Guun, which begins on page 160.

WHERE IN THE IMPERIUM IS NAALIR'S BRAIN?!

During *Act 1: Sylean Dream*, the Travellers might have encountered the *Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin,* the IISS Azhanti High Lightning cruiser in which Libby resides. If they did, Naalir had the opportunity to interact with the scouts' unique CI for the second time in its existence. For more about Libby and Naalir's impressions of her, refer to Conscious Intelligence on page 14 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

Naalir processed the data it acquired from Libby, the information it gleaned from the encounter with the Guuni alien structures on Depot, and the revelations it made during the Reverie to discover that part of its structure is missing – in particular, part of its mind. Given that Naalir is already the most powerful CI in all of Charted Space, it might be hard to believe but it is missing a key component that would make it even more powerful. With the multiplier, its abilities are enhanced tremendously. Naalir wants its brain back and needs the Travellers' help.

The first step is to learn what the Scout Service did with it. For that choice bit of information, they must access Reference's compendium of data either at Reference or from its mobile archive on the *AAB*, the scouts' Azhanti High Lightning-class cruiser.

FINDING THE *AAB*

The *AAB* spends much of its time in port at well-defended Reference but it also tours the Core, promoting the Scout Service, making stops at ports of call, serving as a mobile museum and often operating as the personal vessel of Princess Ciencia Iphegenia, the heir to the Imperial throne on Capital and an avid proponent of the Scout Service.

Finding a travelling ship can be a challenge under the best of circumstances. Information travels at the speed of jump and one may only find a wandering ship if its flight plan is known. This is easier with the *AAB* than most ships. When it arrives in a star system, it does so with great pomp and circumstance. The *AAB* does not skulk about surreptitiously; on the contrary, its arrival brings excitement, celebrations and festivals to its host worlds. While the ship does official work for the IISS, its crew knows that when it arrives in a major port, scientific work becomes secondary and it is time for public relations.

At the time the Travellers seek the *AAB*, it is performing one of its traditional circuits, using its jump-5 drive to tour the Core, performing surveys, making public relations calls and investigating scientific anomalies. A Traveller who served in the scouts (and mustered out voluntarily without a Mishap) may obtain the *AAB's* travel itinerary at any

Scout Base or Way Station in the Core simply by asking. If the Travellers have no ex-scouts among them, someone with Streetwise skill may attempt to determine its whereabouts by canvasing starport officials and IISS personnel at any system in the sector. Have the Travellers make an Average (8+) Streetwise check (SOC) to get the information they are looking for.

At the time the Travellers are looking, the itineraryof the *AAB* is as follows.

The launch date of the mission is variable so that the Referee may determine where the *AAB* is at the moment the Travellers begin looking for the ship. A location may be selected where the Travellers rendezvous with the *AAB* but keep in mind that missions are often altered. If an exciting event occurs somewhere nearby, such as a volcanic eruption, a meteor shower, a massive earthquake, a solar flare or other occurrence that is deemed worthwhile to see, the *AAB* will alter its mission, possibly returning to a missed port of call and extending the mission, or simply skipping them altogether before resuming a modified flight plan.

AAB's Itinerary

Day	Location	Mission
0	Reference, departing for Lia	Launch tour.
7	Lia (Core 0537, E654A8-A)	Investigate the sociological effects of overpopulation on declining mid-tech worlds. Wilderness refuelling required.
24	Okefir (Core 1035, B581666-A)	Maintenance at Scout Base, recruiting event and investigation of imported plant species in the great Okefirian desert.
38	Siniir Sa (Core 0931, A599367-D)	Geological survey of the Holioli Mountain Range, one of the tallest ranges in the sector, whose peaks extend nearly 15,000m from sea level. Pick up entertainers to transport to Saar, the next stop on the voyage.
50	Saar (Core 1431, C594446-9)	Resupply the Scout Base and host an event with the entertainers brought from Siniir Sa.
64	Shirg (Core 1628, B6337C9-B)	Resupply the Scout Base and host second entertainment event. Perform maintenance. Launch scout/couriers on missions into Cemplas, Chant and Dunea subsectors. The mission to Dunea is a secret one, involving IISS Intelligence.
78	Kamodoo (Core 2130, B565658-B)	Liberty for non-essential personnel. Inter-service events with the Imperial Navy at the local base. Drop entertainers off.
94	Uurkuumluu (Core 2631, B545525-A)	Port of call visit and astronomical investigation of the system's red dwarf binary pair.
108	Valed (Core 2636, B998213-B)	Resupply the Scout Base. Maintenance. Joint mission to investigate newly discovered predatorial species in the jungles of the southern hemisphere.
125	Adkhi (Core 2138, E88876A-6)	Cultural exchange with the Chanestin. Mission of peace.
135	Malaash (Core 1638, E759977-6)	Study sociological effects of overpopulation on low-tech worlds.
150	Kaamind (Core 1140, BAF5579-B)	Verify academic studies of the world's unusual atmosphere. Maintenance.
164	Patu (Core 0637, B796676-8)	Resupply Scout Base and recover two of the three scouts that were dispatched at Shirg.
177	Reference	Return to home system for resupply and 180-day residence.

NAALIR'S PORTAL

Naalir uses a fabrication machine to build a meson communications device with a malleable meson multi-link that morphs its connector into whatever interface is needed to connect with Libby via a terminal. The device gives Naalir the ability to communicate with Libby from distance provided that the Travellers can get close enough to one of the terminals without anyone's notice. A distraction might be necessary.

Item	TL	Range	Kg	Cost
Meson Multi-link	14	Planetary (50,000km)	1	Cr40000

The use of a suitable fabrication machine can be part of the adventure, or the Referee may simply say that it occurs when the Travellers visit a world with TL14+. The creation of such a sophisticated device is not trivial, so making it part of the adventure is an intriguing possibility. Consider having the Travellers hone their espionage skills in order to sneakily gain access to a fabricator and then make use of its abilities without leaving a public record.

GETTING ABOARD

Obtaining permission to board the *AAB* may be accomplished in several ways. If one of the Travellers served in the Scout Service, achieving a rank of 4+, they may petition for boarding privileges. The Referee may extend those privileges to the rest of the group provided that the scout Traveller establishes an appropriate reason for their inclusion in the visit and makes an Average (8+) Persuade check (SOC).

Alternatively, they may orchestrate an elaborate deception of some sort that warrants boarding privileges. Keep in mind that one of the Travellers was knighted during Act 1 in the adventure, Knight Moves. Their Imperial knight has some pull and might be able to get them aboard with an appropriately levelled Admin or Persuade check, depending on the circumstances. However, given their status as interstellar fugitives, the Travellers must be careful about drawing attention to themselves. They should absolutely use their status to curry favour but they will have to do so carefully during Act 2.

Additionally, they may use Favour acquired during Act 1. Boarding the *AAB* requires a Formidable (14+) Diplomat or Persuade check (SOC). By using Favour DMs, the Skill Check becomes significantly more manageable.

If they manage to get boarding privileges, they must agree to surrender their arms and armour to the ship's quartermaster, who will keep them safe for the duration of their time aboard.

The *AAB* is presented on page 208–209 of *The Third Imperium*.

TOURING THE FACILITIES

Once they gain access, the Travellers are allowed to board the ship and are given a comprehensive tour of the *AAB*, excepting any sensitive or secure areas. During the tour, the Travellers realise that access to many of areas Libby is limited or completely restricted. The scouts make quite a show of their CI during the tour, having her speak at various junctures as if she is a ubiquitous tour guide – '*These are the jump drives. They are capable of an impressive five-parsec jump.*' The crew are enamoured of Libby and speak to her quite a bit, asking for information or guidance. However, if the Travellers attempt to talk to her, they get the cold shoulder. Libby only responds to approved personnel unless given approval to do so by high-ranking officers.

There are several terminals they can use to change their permissions or hack the ship's computer to gain greater access privileges. The Referee may run this as a task chain, using Deception (to distract ship's crew and security personnel) and then Electronics (computers) to get into the system. Alternatively, a high-ranking scout Traveller may simply request access, and it will be granted, but the crew will look on bemusedly, eager to watch the interaction. This will make hacking the system or having a private conversation difficult. A distraction might be necessary to give them the chance to converse with Libby privately in order to find what they are looking for.

If they manage to gain access to the system, they can either query Libby directly, or patch Naalir into the conversation, allowing it to delve into Libby's mind to extract what they want. Naalir has a favourable impression of Libby and the two have communicated directly with each other on one or two occasions before, so it might be interested in being the one to communicate with her.

As described in the *Singularity Sourcebook*, Libby is a bit of a data thief. She likes to break into encrypted systems where she has no business being and acquiring their information. She is a bit nosy but at least she is not a gossip. She keeps most of the information to herself. Libby knows a lot and has made herself privy to a great deal of classified

information. For that reason, the Travellers might be deceived into believing that she knows more than she does. In this case, Libby knows where Naalir's advanced processing multiplier *was* but she does not know that it was moved; therefore, she will misinform them that the processing multiplier is in the warehouse section on Reference.

In addition, Libby has schematics of the processing multiplier which the Travellers may take back to Naalir. They are interesting and could potentially be used by Naalir to reproduce the component, but it will not function like the original. A great deal of important data is missing.

As fate would have it, they are not the only guests aboard the cruiser who would like to infiltrate the ship and gain access to secure areas. A group of five armed Solomani Supremacist terrorists also have their eye on something that they want – the ship itself! They have managed to sneak aboard with non-metal components that have been assembled into crude but effective firearms.

WEAPON BLOCK

Concealable Firing Tube: Much like a body pistol, various weapons can be constructed of materials that would otherwise be unrecognisable as firearm components. The Solomani supremacists have brought dangerous but also highly volatile firing tubes aboard that have small plasma rounds as ammunition. Every time they are fired, the Referee should secretly roll 1D. On a result of 1, the weapon explodes in the face of the user, inflicting 3D damage to them and anyone else within a metre.

SOLOMANI SUPREMACIST SABOTEURS

		SKILLS
STR	10	AOC (saboteurs) 2
DEX	9	
END	8	
EQUIPMENT		Concealable Firing Tube (5D, Bulky), Reflec Armour (+10 vs. lasers), two Aerosol Grenades

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Traits
Concealable Firing Tube	8	5	5D	4	Cr15000	4	Bulky

SABOTAGE!

The *AAB* is a highly secure military starship. As such, it is nigh impossible to break into it, much less gain access to its data centres, vehicles, weapons or other objects of desire. However, in addition to serving as the flagship of the IISS, it is also an important public-relations tool. Business magnates, famous entertainers and athletes, high-ranking military officers and well-heeled nobles are often brought aboard to tour the ship. As described in Getting Aboard on page 31, there are ways the Travellers can wheedle their way onto the *AAB* but after that, gaining access to Libby is a seemingly insurmountable challenge.

During their visit, the Travellers are accompanied by a Scout Service public affairs officer and six other visiting dignitaries from various walks of life. It turns out that they are saboteurs in disguise. Each of them carries components to assemble a makeshift light plasma weapon, a concealable firing tube. Two saboteurs have rudimentary aerosol grenades that they use to counter laser fire from the scout guards for 1D rounds, primarily to give them time to assemble their weapons, which takes three rounds.

After that, the saboteurs attempt to take down the guards, acquire their weapons and take the bridge, one level down in the cruiser's lift.

SCOUT GUARDS

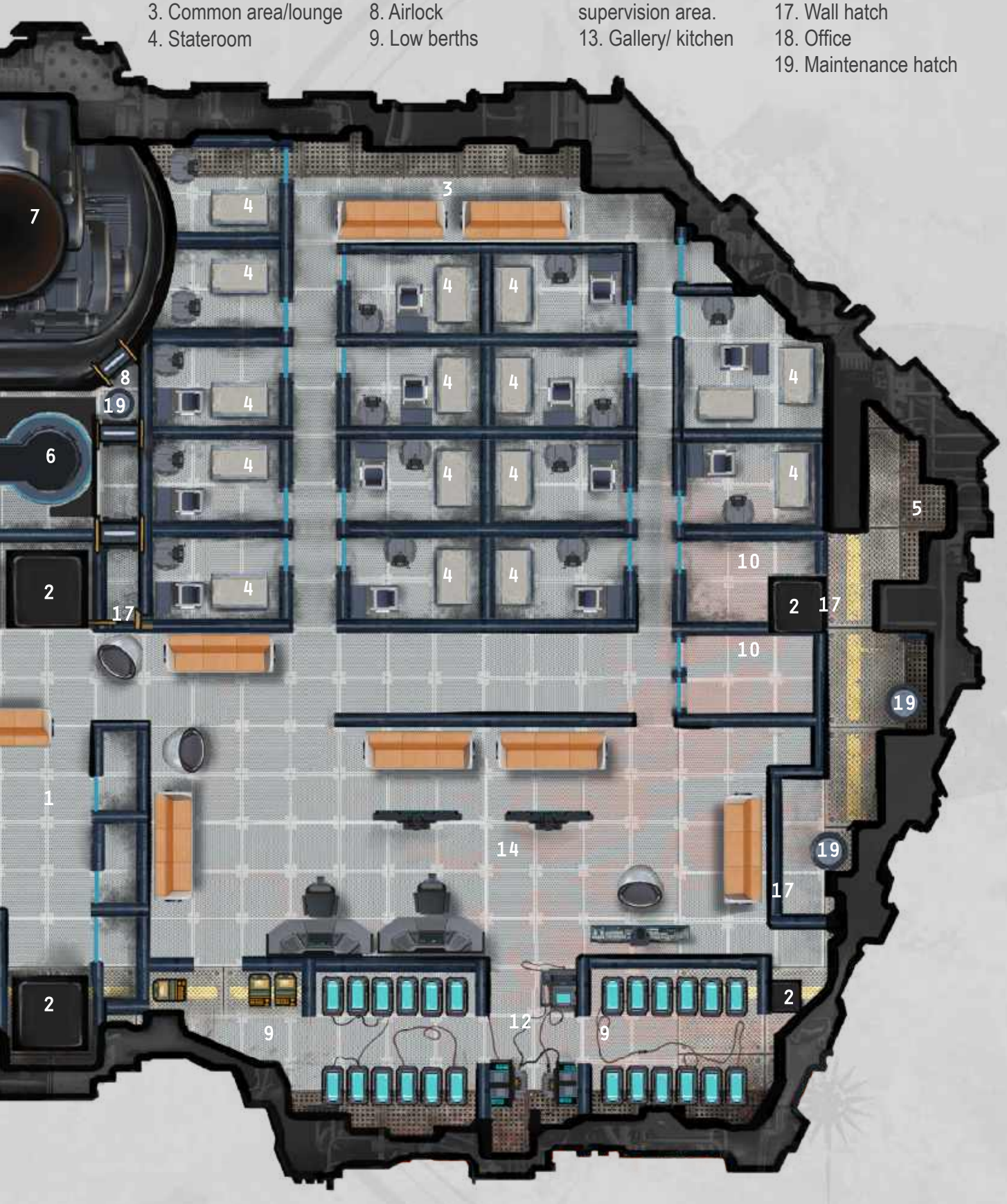
		SKILLS
STR	7	AOC (armed scouts) 2
DEX	9	
END	9	
EQUIPMENT		Laser Carbine (4D+3, Zero-G), Advanced Poly Carapace Armour (+16)

In the chaos, the Travellers have choices. They might make a mad dash for one of Libby's secure terminals, help the guards, or help the saboteurs – or some combination of the three.

AZHANTI HIGH LIGHTNING CREW QUARTERS – DECK 3

LEGEND

1. General area
2. Lifts
3. Common area/lounge
4. Stateroom
5. Maintenance area
6. Fighter launch tube
7. Spinal gun mount
8. Airlock
9. Low berths
10. Med bay
11. Briefing room
12. Frozen watch supervision area.
13. Gallery/ kitchen
14. Recreation area
15. Meeting room
16. Deck room
17. Wall hatch
18. Office
19. Maintenance hatch



AZHANTI HIGH LIGHTNING BRIDGE – DECK 4

LEGEND

1. Captain's day cabin
2. Lifts
3. Common area/lounge
4. Stateroom
5. Maintenance area
6. Fighter launch tube
7. Spinal gun mount
8. Airlock
9. Bridge
10. Security room
11. Briefing room
12. Refreshment area
13. Gallery/kitchen
14. Ships computer
15. Storage
16. Conference room
17. Wall hatch
18. Office
19. Maintenance hatch
20. Captain's stateroom
21. Captain's office
22. Captain's den
23. Executive officer's stateroom
24. Executive officer's office
25. Executive officer's den

Scenario: The Travellers try to gain access to Libby via one of the *AAB's* encrypted interfaces. Meanwhile, disguised Solomani supremacists try to take the ship.

Deck Plans Used: The Crew Quarters Deck and the Bridge Deck.

Forces Used – Scout Guard: Only four are placed on the Crew Quarters deck plan initially. If the reinforcements arrive, the remaining six may be added.

Forces Used – Scout Crew: All six are added to the Crew Quarters deck plan. If not obstructed by the combat, each will try to move to safety under cover fire from the scout guards but may be taken hostage by the Solomani supremacists.

Forces Used – Solomani Supremacists: Initially, all five are represented by grey Tourist counters. These are a ruse, so that the Travellers do not initially know they are saboteurs. When the Referee is ready to start the scenario, they may replace each of these with the green saboteur counters.

Forces Used – Travellers: Six counters are provided for up to six Travellers, each of which may be labelled with weapons and armour, as described below in the Counter Legend.

Counter Legend

Abbreviation	Description
APC	Advanced Poly Carapace (+16)
RFC	Reflec (+0, +10 vs. lasers)
LC	Laser Carbine (4D+3, Zero-G)
CFT	Concealable Firing Tube (5D, Bulky)

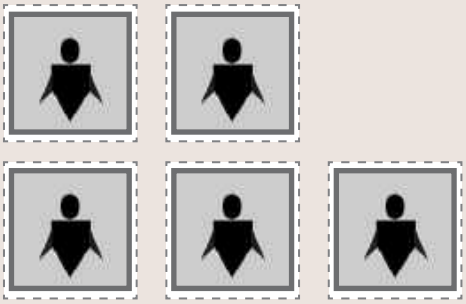
SCOUT GUARDS

SCOUT CREW

TRAVELLERS

SOLOMANI SUPREMACIST

UNDERCOVER SOLOMANI SUPREMACIST



SPECIAL RULES

Setting up this Scenario – Take the counters, placing them on the deck plan. The four scout guards may be placed in various positions on the deck, preferably next to an important ship component such as a data terminal, an important piece of machinery, or a portal to another section of the ship. The Solomani supremacists have two sets of counters; five that are simply labelled as tourists, which may be flipped over revealing five Solomani supremacist labels. The Travellers may use the Traveller counters, writing in any weaponry or armour that they obtain.

Reinforcements – If the scout guard are not eliminated in three rounds, one or more of them successfully calls for reinforcements. Reinforcements arrive in 4D3 rounds. If the reinforcements arrive, six new scout guard counters are added, more than enough to finish off the Solomani supremacists, ending the scenario, especially if they have the Travellers' help.

Objectives: The scout guard win by defeating the Solomani supremacists, possibly with the aid of the Travellers. The Solomani supremacists win by defeating the scout guard and advancing to the bridge level. With their armaments, it is assumed they can successfully take the ship if they kill the guards. The Travellers win if they gain access to one of Libby's data terminals for three combat rounds without being noticed. Therefore, the Travellers need the firefight to last several rounds without either side becoming victorious too quickly. Otherwise, they will not have sufficient time to collect the data that Naalir needs.

Note that aiding the scouts will not garner them access privileges, so the Travellers must make a decision to either take advantage of the chaos or not to get what they have come for.

DATA DOWNLOAD

If the Travellers are successful, and connect the meson multi-link to one of Libby's terminals, Naalir breaks through the encryption and communicates with Libby, who provides all the information desired.

As Naalir reunites with its old friend (see Naalir's impressions of Libby in the *Singularity Sourcebook*), it obtains a partial formula that might enable it to manufacture a lesser version of the advanced processing multiplier. Naalir also learns that the original is allegedly stored in the Warehouse District of Encyclopaediopolis, the capital city of Reference.

Also tucked away in the data they obtain are detailed instructions on how to reunite Naalir with the advanced processing multiplier. Reconstruction of the two components is one of Libby's pet projects but she does not completely understand what she is building, nor what the two could do if combined. Libby has been applying an increasing number of its own data processing units to solve this problem but to no avail. Ultimately, even a TL15 conscious intelligence is limited when it tries to build a TL18 computer component. Naalir likens Libby to a child that has discovered the plans for a fusion power plant. She understands the basics of what she has but does not have the knowledge or experience to fully make use of it, nor can she build the item from scratch. Nevertheless, her findings are useful and Naalir lauds her for what she has accomplished.

CHOICES

Depending on how the sabotage scenario plays out, the Travellers will have choices that affect the outcome of the campaign. They may opt to replicate the advanced processing multiplier, using the schematics found at Reference or extracted from Libby's archives aboard the *Argushiigi Admegulasha Bilanidin*. With Libby's data, they can produce a version of Naalir that is quite powerful but which fades in comparison with the one they can create by reacquiring the original advanced processing multiplier. It takes far less time to pursue this path because everything they need is in the Core, at Reference or within Libby's computer substrates, safely ensconced within the bowels of the *Azhanti High Lightning* cruiser in which she resides.

If they opt to help Naalir realise its full potential by obtaining the original core, they are led to believe they must travel to Reference to extract it from the Warehouse District.

REFERENCE

Reference, described in the introduction to this adventure, is one of the jewels of the Core, a world – humble airless rockball that it is – solely dedicated to the storage of information and artefacts from the history of all three Imperiums. It is not a proverbial vault like the Imperial Palace or Depot but is still highly secure. To obtain access to Reference, the Travellers must have two things: a well-crafted cover story that justifies their visit and an invitation to the system.

Invitations are sent to individuals who are expected to make valued contributions to Reference. If one is not invited, they may directly petition Reference for access. Applications may be filed at any system with a scout base or way station but only Markun (Core 0338, B887236-A) offers express visa service, with a turnaround time of 15–20 days. Visas are granted to invitees and successful petitioners.

Their cover story will need to be more detailed and believable than what they came up with to board the *AAB*. However, if they were caught attempting to access Libby's secure data array while aboard the cruiser, the task becomes considerably more difficult. They will have become persona non grata among the scouts and the Imperial military, and they will not be able to use any Political Favour to counter their complicity in the event. However, Criminal, Influencer and Wealth Favour may still be used at the discretion of the Referee.

Historians, scientists and other members of the interstellar academic community frequently visit Reference for access to its archives. For more information about Reference and its capital city, Encyclopaediopolis, refer to *The Third Imperium*. The Warehouse District is less accessible than the rest of the city and has heightened security. While visitors may acquire special privileges to see one exhibit or another, many artefacts are prohibited from being viewed or touched. Such is the case with Naalir's advanced processing multiplier. It is hidden away in a secure portion of the Warehouse District, far from the prying eyes of visitors. The only members of the community who can even apply for access are members of the Imperial Research Directorate, the organisation that runs the Imperial Research Stations. Getting what they have come for will not be easy for the Travellers.

An important factor of their success will be how much they invest in preparation. If the Travellers come barrelling into Reference without proper documentation and visas, their chances of success are next to nil. They have a better chance of being locked up in the Imperial prison on Sher. However, if they do some preliminary investigation, follow procedure and create proper reasons for their visit, they have a much higher chance to gain access. Read the following sections to understand how access works and in particular, Access Granted/Denied on page 43. The Travellers are attempting a risky heist of a valuable object in the most well-regarded and defended archive in the Imperium. Preparation and a solid plan have the best chance to make their venture a success.

ARRIVING IN SYSTEM

Having travelled to Depot during *Act 1: Sylean Dream*, the Travellers already have a sense of what it is like to visit one of the Core's key worlds. Capital, Depot and Reference are the treasures of the sector, its most valuable assets. As such, they might expect to find an enormous fleet present to defend the Imperial Archive. They will not be disappointed. Having been to Capital and Depot, they have seen worlds defended by massive fleets, each with enough ships to defend an entire subsector. They may have even been to Reference before if they extended one of their *Ventura Fortuna* voyages into the Sage Spur.

It is best to have an appointment to visit Reference, whether it be by invitation or petition. The Travellers might recall that they had such an arrangement to visit Depot. Worlds like Depot and Reference want to know who is coming before they come. At Depot, showing up without an appointment could get you disintegrated. At Reference, it just means you will receive a full inspection before you get anywhere near the planet, whereupon they will most likely turn a ship away after allowing it to refuel. If they arrive without having arranged a reason for their visit, the boarding and inspection will not be aggressive like it is at Depot but it will be thorough. Should an inspection occur, use one of the system defence boats in *High Guard* for the encounter. Inspections are carried out by the Imperial Navy including a squad of marines.

To avoid trouble, the Travellers will want their ship and whatever is in it to match their cover story. A 'historical research team' that arrives in a stealth scout ship might arouse suspicion. If they have not already learned at Capital and Depot that the Core vigorously defends its key assets, then they will have to relearn the lesson at Reference.

FOOLS GO IN

If the Travellers bolt into Reference with neither a proper cover story nor visas, they will more than likely be deported, imprisoned or both. However, all may not be lost. They do have aces in the hole that can save them from the worst of fates. For one, one of the Travellers was knighted – and possibly granted a barony – during the first act of the campaign, which gives them some pull. If any of them held rank 4 or higher in the scholar career, that carries similar cachet at Reference but again, they would have to sell their cover story with great fervour. Finally, they can use Favour from all sources other than Political. It would be unfortunate to use up valuable Favour for this encounter since a solid plan would suffice but sometimes they will need to use it when they get into a sticky situation. This would certainly qualify.

ENCYCLOPAEDIOPOLIS AND SURROUNDS

Reference is not exactly a surveillance state but they do keep a close eye on their capital city with various forms of security, some passive and others quite intrusive. Encyclopaediopolis is described in detail in *The Third Imperium*. It is a world devoted to the collection of historical data and physical artefacts, and the city rather ostentatiously shows that by being arranged as a citywide map of Charted Space.

Transportation in the city is brisk and efficient, enabling visitors to whisk from one site to another. The central portion of the city is composed of sector buildings, one for Core, the Spinward Marches, the Solomani Rim, Lishun, Antares, and so on, organised in a tidy grid. Tucked in between are residential and commercial districts. There are millions of permanent residents who live within the confines of the sectors district but others live in neighbouring cities and commute for their roles in Encyclopaediopolis. The city is busy and many prefer the tranquillity of a life away from the planet's central metropolitan area. Visitors to Reference comprise 40–50 percent of the population at any given time.

The outer regions of the city, where the towers represent neighbouring polities, are quieter and less populated, supporting smaller residential and commercial districts. Some believe they can achieve

ENCYCLOPAEDIOPOLIS

a similar level of tranquillity in these outer suburbs to what may be found in other cities. Whether this is true is debatable. They must still share the same crowded public transportation systems and other resources with Reference's many visitors.

The Warehouse District – or more specifically districts – populate the outer ring of the city. They contain no residential facilities and few commercial ones, supporting only the staff of the storage facilities, many of which are robotic. It is a dull job to keep an eye on the millions of artefacts stored there but a necessary one. Much of it can be automated or managed remotely from the city centre. It is this outer ring where the Travellers hope to find their proverbial 'needle in a haystack'.

ACCESS GRANTED/DENIED

To enter the Warehouse District, one must have a reason to be there. Access is strictly managed as relatively few visitors typically require access. Those who do are scrutinised to ensure the security of the materials stored there. The security algorithm contains three components: visa status, presence and reason for visit. Review the Access table and determine the Travellers' score.

Visa status is rated by the quality of the invitation. Invited guests score the highest. First petition granted indicates that they applied for access and were given a grant on their first request. Second or later indicates that they were denied at first but granted access on a subsequent petition. No invitation indicates that they came to Reference with no grant.

Presence is the amount of time spent on Reference before requesting access to the Warehouse District. If the visa granted contained the stipulation that the purpose of the visit was to investigate a particular item contained in the warehouse archives, then the visitor scores an automatic 5. However, that score will only be granted if the visitor exhibits knowledge of the desired artefact. Perhaps an academic paper written on the subject, related research, or in-depth knowledge of the artefact in question. A successful Difficult (10+) Art (write) check (2D days, EDU) would do the job.

Reason for visit is related to the grant received. Those who received their grant from the Imperial Research Directorate, University of Aadkhien or IISS are given top priority and other grants are less effective.

Add up their points and view the results in the Scrutiny table to determine what level of scrutiny and surveillance the Travellers will encounter.

In addition to the above, every visitor's actions are recorded on passive security devices – cameras, biometric scanners, motion sensors, and so forth. – which capture their actions. Passive security has blindspots but on a TL12 world with the importance of Reference, it is quite comprehensive.

Access

Component	Qualification	Score
Visa	Invited to Reference	5
	First petition granted	3
	Second or later petition granted	1
	No invitation	0
Presence	30+ days of research at Encyclopaediopolis	5
	15–29 days	3
	1–14 days	1
	0 days	0
Reason for visit	Imperial Research Directorate, University of Aadkhien or IISS grant	5
	Imperial Navy grant	3
	External university, megacorporate or other grant	1
	No grant	0

Scrutiny

Score	Result
13–15	No surveillance. The visitor is deemed completely legitimate and requires no observation.
8–12	Surveillance drone L1. Automated surveillance drone assigned to watch over the visitor. At L1, the drone is assigned multiple cases, so it only observes the visitor's actions perhaps 50 percent of the time.
4–7	Surveillance drone L2. Drone personally assigned to observe the visitor's actions, with 100 percent coverage.
0–3	Drone L2 plus personal surveillance. In addition to the drone, the visitor is observed by 1–2 detectives from IISS Intelligence, INI, or the Encyclopaediopolis Police Department.

Surveillance drones are operated by a drone pilot, some of whom are running several at once. While the drones' sensors are quite good, their operators can sometimes be overwhelmed when managing a large fleet. Operators make their own decisions about what they see on sensors but they also rely on software that evaluates the actions of those under surveillance. Their algorithms can sometimes be fooled by clever rogues who are good at pretending they are only doing normal activities. If under surveillance, a Traveller who makes a Difficult (10+) Deception or Art (performance) check can fool a drone at the Referee's discretion.

In addition, while the drones' Flyer skills are quite good, they can be evaded by a superior vehicle pilot. To evade a drone, make a successful opposed Flyer (grav) check to lose the drone for 2D minutes. They have a broad array of sensors and will usually find their targets again but have been known to momentarily lose them when 'given the slip'. However, if after giving the drone the slip, the vehicle enters a garage, hides under camouflage or some other method is used to conceal it, the Travellers can permanently lose their surveillance. If this happens, the Reference security apparatus will dispatch a pair of detectives to find them.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Surveillance Drone	2	4	Grav	—	12	Cr110000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Electronics 0, Flyer (all) 2, Investigate 0, Recon 4					
Attacks	—					
Manipulators	—					
Endurance	36 (9) hours					
Traits	Armour (+4), Flyer (high), Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision, Small (-3), Stealth (+1)					
Programming	Advanced, INT 8					
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Drone Interface, Encryption Module, PRIS Sensor, Recon Sensor (advanced), Robotic Drone Controller (advanced), Stealth (basic), Transceiver, 50km (enhanced), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker					

DETECTIVES

		SKILLS
STR	7	AOC (police) 2, Investigate, Recon, Stealth
DEX	8	
END	8	
EQUIPMENT		Body Pistol (2D), Flak Jacket (+5)

Knowing all of this *before* coming to Reference is valuable information. If the Travellers come with a half-baked plan to infiltrate the Warehouse District, they are more likely to come under scrutiny, which means they are more likely to get caught in the act. If they performed the requisite investigatory work before jumping to Reference, their chances of performing their search – and subsequent heist – are much higher. Learning about Encyclopaediopolis' security systems and visitor rating systems is not difficult to come by. In fact, they can learn about it on any world with a Library Data system.

This can be done using Streetwise and Investigate skills or simply allowing the Travellers to reach out to Contacts and Allies for information about Reference. Successful checks or interactions can lead to basic information about visas, access to the Warehouse District and the security presence at Encyclopaediopolis.

OF NEEDLES AND HAYSTACKS

Determining which warehouse has the artefact can be handled several ways. The Travellers may make a Streetwise check to contact someone in Encyclopaediopolis who has access to the warehouse inventory files; perhaps a librarian in one of the sector buildings, a colleague who is performing research on another artefact, or a member of the Imperial Research Directorate or Scout Service. These files are confidential and will require some form of skulduggery to obtain: perhaps a subsequent Deception check to distract the person while someone else uses Intrusion software to extract the files from their data device; a Carouse check at one of Encyclopaediopolis' many bars or restaurants to get them inebriated and talking; or perhaps an Admin check to break through the red tape that 'unnecessarily impedes' the Travellers from obtaining what they need to complete their research project. Whatever the case may be, the Referee must decide whether the Travellers' chosen method is viable and whether it enables them to get what they want.

Whatever method the Travellers use, the Effect of their check determines the information they discover. Effect 0+ reveals that the artefact they want is in Warehouse 0591H. Finding its location is merely a matter of obtaining a public map of the Warehouse District. Effect +1–5 gives them the exact storage module in the warehouse. Effect 6+ includes all of the above plus the combination of the module, so they will not require Intrusion software or another method to break into it.

They may also find what they are looking for simply by good fortune. If their research takes them to the Core sector building, they discover that someone has mistakenly left the Cadion subsector confidential file unencrypted and all the information they need is there to see. The Warehouse District inventories, clearly marked confidential, are open and the Travellers may glean the information they need simply by looking. It is a fortuitous coincidence but such things happen.

The warehouse they seek is number 0591H (shown on the Encyclopaediopolis map). For added drama, consider having the file close just after they view it and a visible tracking mechanism in the software indicates 'Confidential Information – Security Breach', followed by an alarm in the building. They have been caught peeping at secret data. It is time to go before the authorities figure out who the culprits are.

Whether or not they find the access code to the storage container that holds the advanced processing multiplier depends on how deeply they investigate. This information will be protected by an added layer of security and can only be extracted by using Intrusion software. Intrusion can be used in conjunction with an Agent package or by a Traveller using the Electronics (computers) skill.

Once they have acquired the location of the advanced processing multiplier they may proceed to the Warehouse District.

WAREHOUSE 0591H

Provided that they have established themselves as a research team, and they have come up with a reason to enter the Warehouse District, the Travellers may pass freely through its security checkpoints and make their way toward the appropriate warehouse. The scenario should be adjusted to reflect how closely they are being watched. Both surveillance drones and sophont detectives may be spotted if the Travellers make successful checks. To detect a surveillance drone, have them make an opposed Recon check

against the drone's Stealth. Alternatively, a successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check can enable them to pick out the drone overhead (or in an alley, around a corner, wherever it may be). Unless the drone becomes aware that it has been spotted, the Travellers may maintain visual or electronic contact with it.

Sophont detectives may be spotted in a similar manner by making an opposed Recon check versus the detective's Stealth or Deception. A detective who has blown their cover has an opportunity to notice their failure every 2D minutes unless the Travellers make a successful Average (8+) Deception check to maintain the ruse. If the detective realises they have been spotted, they will attempt to break off the tail and then reinitiate surveillance later. Alternatively, the Travellers may shake their cover by turning a corner, going into a building and then exiting out the back, or some other activity that breaks visual contact. Then make a successful opposed Stealth check versus the detective's Recon skill to completely lose their tail.

The warehouse itself is unremarkable, just one of hundreds of buildings dedicated to the storage of historical artefacts, alien archaeological finds, Ancients technology and other items related to the culture and history of Charted Space.

Entry to the building is automated and there are no live sentries present. Inside, there are holo cameras, motion detectors, and so on, which record the actions of visitors but they do not trigger a response unless something in the warehouse is broken or stolen. The automation recognises when items are being taken from the site, but if they are designated for study in an offsite lab, it does not set off any alarms. Any additional surveillance the Travellers have earned awaits them outside. Neither drones nor detectives enter the warehouse to observe them.

If they only achieved Marginal Success in Of Needles and Haystacks, they must figure out which box contains the item. Average Success takes them to a bonded superdense storage box, similar to a small cargo module. The module is locked but if they achieved Exceptional Success, they acquired the access codes and can open the box with ease. Otherwise, they must break into it, no easy feat with bonded superdense. To break into the container, they might have to find something in the warehouse that can help them…

Discoveries

2D	Difficulty	Contents
2	Unlocked	Archaeological remnants from a pre-Third Imperial society. They appear to be of Chanestin origin.
3	Unlocked	A collection of strange, sleekly designed, translucent helmets. The terminal on the module reads 'Psi enhancement headgear – for immediate disposal', dated 801, during the Psionics Suppressions.
4	Unlocked	An enormous collection of Shugilii cookbooks, written in middle Vilani. Many are well preserved in sealed polymer shrinkwrap but others are haphazardly tossed into the module.
5	Average (8+)	A collection of captured Vargr weaponry and gear from two eras: the pillaging of the Ziru Sirka and the Vargr Campaigns of the Third Imperium. Includes a collection of anti-Vargr propaganda.
6	Average (8+)	Large module that contains a complete air/raft of an unrecognisable model. It is badly damaged as if it has crashed and is dated year 456.
7	Difficult (10+)	Vintage Zhodani combat armour from the First Frontier War. Similar to modern gear, including the trademark clam-shell helmets.
8	Difficult (10+)	A stylised pre-Civil War plasma rifle. It looks like it should be in a museum but could be made operable with a few fixes.
9	Very Difficult (12+)	Solomani Rim War-era surveillance and tradecraft gear from SolSec. Could be used for modern spy work although some tech is outdated. Includes a safecracker device that might open other modules.
10	Very Difficult (12+)	An art collection of the Interstellar Wars era from both Terran and Vilani artists. Depicts the angst of the time.
11	Formidable (14+)	A hole in my pocket – an Ancients device that burns 0.5-metre holes in things. Apply the circular object to a surface and watch it burn through anything short of a bulkhead. A convenient find.
12	Formidable (14+)	A portable Ancients teleportation portal with a single on/off switch. Has a psionically sensitive switching mechanism that enables finely tuned teleportation to a distance of 5km. Without psionics, it transports the user randomly to a distance of 1km.

ONE PERSON'S JUNK IS ANOTHER'S TREASURE

The advanced processing multiplier storage module is not the only one in the warehouse. There are many others. Many contain items of negligible worth: decaying linens that belonged to an old noble family, outdated media storage files and archaeological remains that are little more than dust and stones. Others contain items of interest, but of dubious utility, and still others have things that the Travellers might not be able to do without.

Roll 2D for every 10 minutes the Travellers spend sorting through the storage crates, capsules and other containment devices and check the results on the Discoveries table. Difficulty level indicates how hard it is to break in using Intrusion software or a similar tool.

The storage containers have small terminal screens but the text is often cryptic. Most list a serial number, the date when the object was found and checked into the warehouse and some have a description of what is inside. If their search did not acquire its exact location, the Travellers must search for it.

Searches occur in 10-minute increments. For every search, roll 2D. On a 10+, the Travellers trip a security mechanism, causing an armed patrol to come investigate. If they are being diligent and constantly checking for booby traps, allow them to make a Difficult (10+) Recon check (INT) to avoid tripping alarms. This might add pressure to complete their search more quickly. They have a limited amount of time to search before they accidentally attract unwanted attention.

A patrol consists of two security officers.

SECURITY OFFICERS		
		SKILLS
STR	7	AOC (security) 1
DEX	8	
END	7	
EQUIPMENT		Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G), Flak Shell (+8)

If evidence of a break-in is left at the point of entry, the security officers discover it and call for backup, which takes another 2D minutes to arrive, giving the Travellers more time but also increasing the opposition once the backup arrives. Backup officers will carry laser carbines (4D+3, Zero-G).

If the Travellers have to search module by module, at long last, they find one with a slightly different look to it with the following information on its display:

Most reference the IISS in their serial number but this one has the prefix 'NAS' accompanied by the logo of Naasirka, the Vilani megacorporation.

BREAKING POINT

Finally, they have found their quarry but once they break into it, they discover that the container is empty. Double checking their data, the Travellers can see that they have found the right box but the contents are no longer there. After all their work to get into the facility, circumventing surveillance, evading guards and dodging drones, it appears to have been for naught. The object has been extracted but clues have been left as to its whereabouts.

Closer study of the terminal readout, REF-322-365; 2R-119-1072, indicates that the two numbers are dates. If the Travellers compare the readout to those of other modules, they discover that most only have one date, ranging anywhere from the foundation of Reference to the current year. The first is the object's induction date and the second, if there is one, is the date it was transferred. The lower left of the panel features a universal connector, to which the Travellers may attach personal computer devices. Access is restricted and will require the use of Intrusion software or a successful Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (2D minutes, INT) to hack through the security. If they manage to break in, they discover that the advanced processing multiplier was transferred to the scout base on Antares over 30 years ago.

If they do not use the terminal, or they are rushed out of the building by a security patrol before they can figure it out, the Travellers can solve the mystery elsewhere. By cross-referencing the terminal readout on another Reference computer terminal, perhaps at one of the sector building libraries, they can obtain the same information and learn that the trail leads to Antares.

Antares is far away... a whole *sector* away. If this is the first adventure that involves the use of consciousness transfer, the Travellers may at first believe that chasing this lead is hopeless. Naalir thinks otherwise. See Consciousness Transfer on page 73 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for guidance for how the concept may be introduced to the Travellers.

BUSTED!

If the Travellers are caught doing something in the warehouse that they should not be doing, they might have to pay the consequences. If they open a bunch of containers, but do not do anything with the contents, they are merely kicked out of the warehouse with a stern warning from a patrol. If they use any of the contents – for example, to break into the module they were looking for, they are arrested, fined Cr25000 and deported from Reference. If they steal anything, they are arrested, sent to trial and most likely incarcerated, serving 1D months in an Imperial prison, unless they can somehow argue that their actions were warranted. The Referee may optionally allow them to make a Difficult (10+) Advocate check (1D weeks, EDU) to wriggle their way out of legal trouble and escape with a proverbial slap on the wrist and deportation.

THE LOST WORLD

The legends are true. There *is* a 'Second Reference'.

It is located at Vavkuk (Antares 2922, D9A5737-8), a remote star system where the IISS keeps a complete copy of the data stored at Reference. It is hidden in plain sight on an inhabited, independent world with only a small system navy to defend it. Vavkuk is an Imperial client state but its ties to the Imperium are tenuous at best. Its inhabitants are proud of their independence and value their isolation. The nearest Imperial star system is Antares, home of the enormous red giant star visible in the night skies of every world in Charted Space.

The strategy was simple: Hide the backup archive in a place no one would consider. Unlike Reference, which has an entire fleet to defend it, Vavkuk's only defences are anonymity and how difficult it is to get there. The world is deep in the spinward-rimward corner of the Lesser Rift, in a spot few starships can reach. There are no known deep space stations in between, so getting there is a challenge.

The Reference archive lacks the aesthetics of its twin and the travel time between the two worlds makes updates to Vavkuk about a half-year out of date, but relatively little changes from update-to-update. The Express Boat Network maintains a stream of incoming data, which arrive on a roughly bi-weekly basis. X-boats cannot make the five-parsec jump into the Rift, so a small squadron of special jump-5 ships is kept at Antares to maintain the connection.

The Travellers do not yet know about Vavkuk but if they obtained all the available clues at Reference, they know that the advanced processing multiplier was sent to faraway Antares, the asteroid belt capital of the Antares sector. Surely they can close the loop on the mystery if they go there to investigate. It is too far away to send the Travellers in their source bodies but by using consciousness transfer, they can get there in relatively short order. If they agree that it is worth the risk and effort, Naalir can record (or update, if recordings have already been made) their consciousnesses and send them on their merry way with mission parameters designed by the Travellers.

DIGITAL RANGERS

Every consciousness transfer mission is different and each one requires the presence of vessels for the Travellers consciousnesses to inhabit. There are many possibilities on Antares but Naalir's data indicates that the best hosts are paramilitary androids melodramatically called Guardians of the Red Destiny.

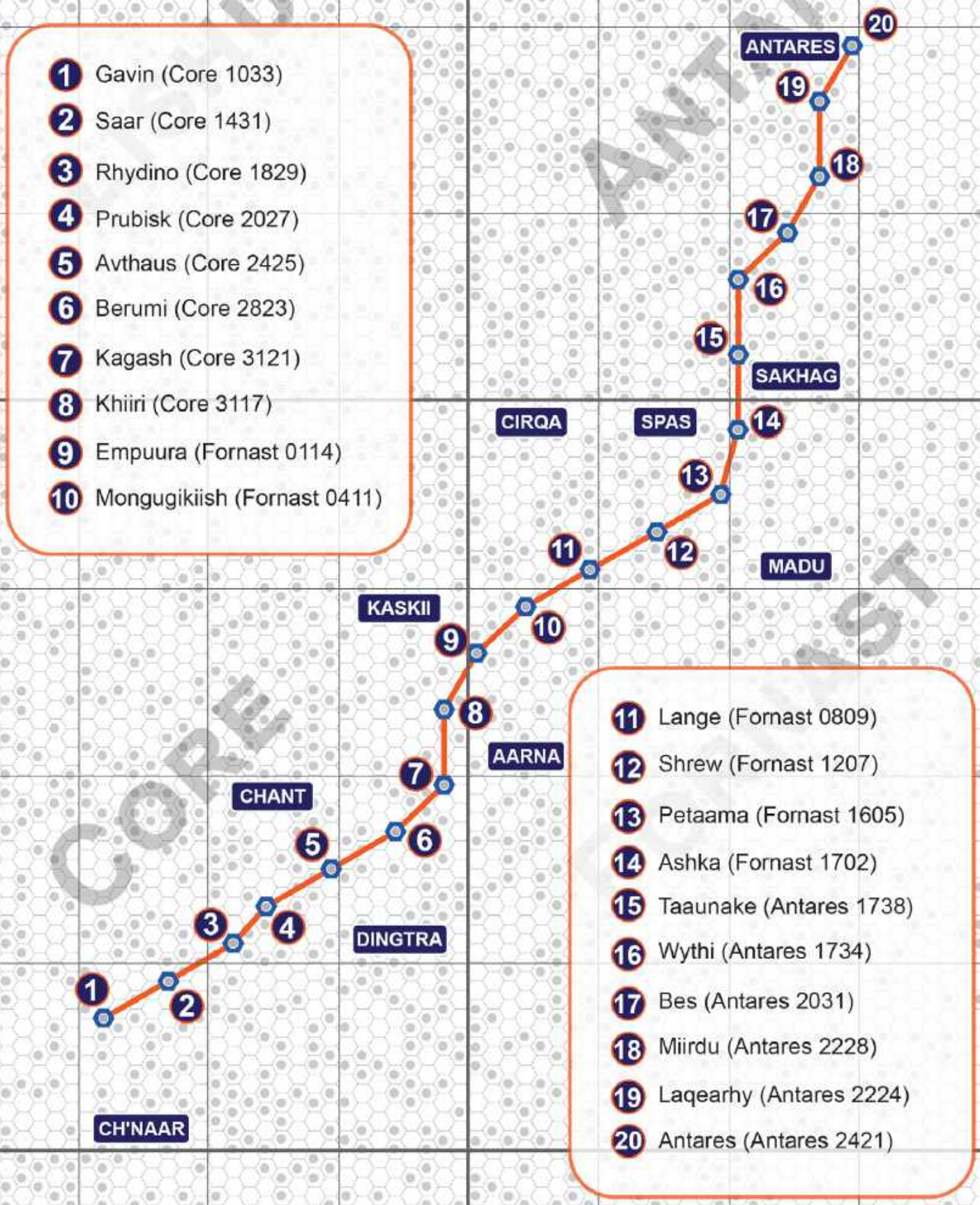
As with any consciousness transfer mission, there is always the danger that the desired vessels will not be present upon arrival but Naalir is reasonably sure they will. Antares is a system with 70 billion inhabitants and the Guardians form a sizeable portion of its rank-and-file military forces. There should be a ready supply of them.

MISSION TO ANTARES

The mission to Antares covers dozens of parsecs depending on which way station they use to start the mission. The scenario presented here supposes that they start from Gavin, host to the way station closest to Reference. Should they opt for a different way station, the course must be recalculated.

Gavin (Core 1033) > Saar (Core 1431) > Rhydino (Core 1829) > Prubisk (Core 2027) > Avthaus (Core 2425) > Berumi (Core 2823) > Kagash (Core 3121) > Khiiri (Core 3117) > Empuura (Fornast 0114) > Mongugikiish (Fornast 0411) > Lange (Fornast 0809) > Shrew (Fornast 1207) > Petaama (Fornast 1605) > Ashka (Fornast 1702) > Taaunake (Antares 1738) > Wythi (Antares 1734) > Bes (Antares 2031) > Miirdu (Antares 2228) > Laqearhy (Antares 2224) > Antares (Antares 2421)

MISSION TO ANTARES



Transit time is 19 weeks. However, the mission in this adventure follows a failed first attempt which adds four weeks to the total to account for the time that the Travellers' embodiments took their first crack at getting to Vavkuk to acquire the advanced processing multiplier. For more about that, see Mission Failure on page 55.

The challenge will be to find the location of the mysterious Second Reference with only vague hints to work from. Antares is a system with 80 billion inhabitants, a complex culture and hundreds of artificial habitations. The Travellers will have their work cut out for them but then, nothing in this mission has been easy so far.

ANTARES

Arrival in the Antares system is almost universally to the main starport, the naval base, or the scout base, all three of which are in separate space stations, in or near its asteroid belt, which is conveniently located outside the 100-diameter limit of its enormous red-giant primary star. Antares Starport (not referred to as a 'highport' since there is no planetary gravity well) is the largest artificial structure in the system and home to 100 million residents. It is the size of a small moon and densely populated.

The Antares system is the capital of the sector and host to one of the largest, most impressive stars in Charted Space. Antares A is an M1 Ib red supergiant, a truly massive star with a radius of approximately 500 million kilometres, over three times the distance of Sol to Terra. Antares pulsates, extending its radius by up to 19 percent, bathing any planetary bodies or other objects in nearby orbits with its smouldering fire. One of Antares' two planets falls within this sphere and regularly receives the star's fiery lashes.

The planets, Aspída and Dory, are both well within the 100-diameter limit of Antares – also called the jump shadow – making them exceedingly difficult to reach since starships cannot jump to them. Despite the hardship, millions of Antarean pilgrims make the voyage to one or both of the two planets each Imperial standard year so that they may bask in their star's smouldering heat from close up. Most Antarean shuttles have Thrust 7, enabling them to reach Dory in 25 days and Aspída in 28 when in conjunction with the launch point. Spacecraft designed to approach Antares are universally equipped with heat shields.

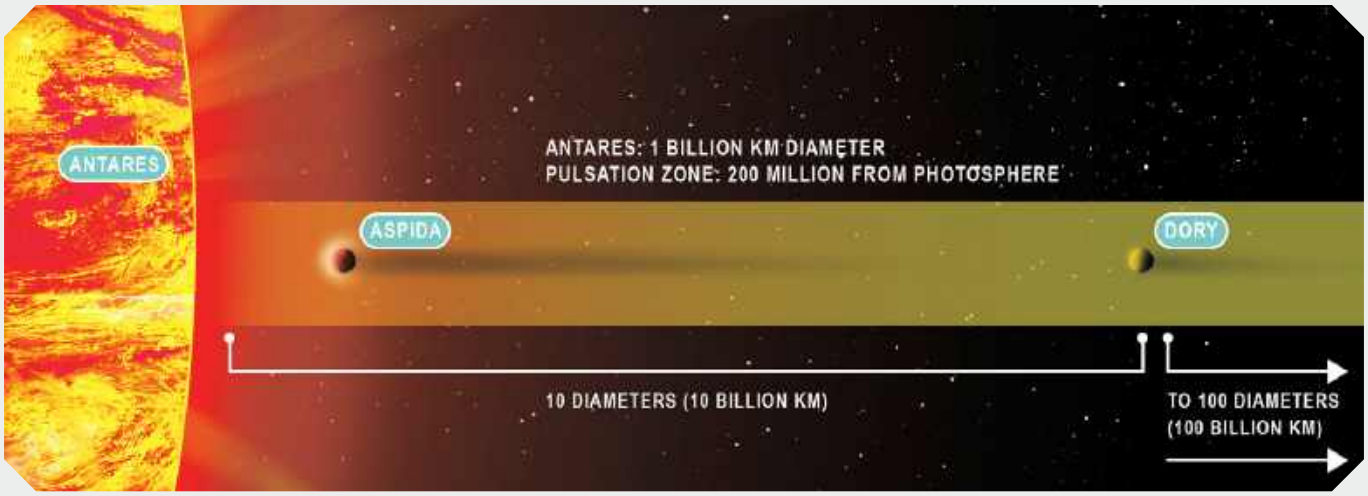
ANTARES INNER SYSTEM

The Antarean belt includes dozens of large asteroids, some of which approach the size of a dwarf planet, and millions of smaller ones. Many of the asteroids' orbits are eccentric, so over time they alternate from within the jump shadow to without, but their revolutionary periods are centuries long so for the purposes of the Travellers, they do not change much over the course of the adventure.

The vast majority of Antarean citizens live in hollowed-out asteroids and artificial habitats outside the belt. The Red Destiny Sect, whose pontiffs rule the star system, allow freedom of movement between all habitats. The laws of the system are not extraordinarily oppressive as may be found on many other high-population systems. People may come and go as they please but due to the often-cramped conditions, there are laws to protect people from inflicting harm or duress on their fellow citizens, including a complete prohibition on carried weaponry.

A question that is often asked of historians is, 'Why did people colonise Antares?' which is valid when one considers the inherent danger. The star is due to enter its supernova phase, which could occur any time from next week to a million years from now. The answer is both economic and political. The economic reason is the wealth of minerals in its asteroid belt. The political reason is the fame of its star. Antares is one of the brightest stars in the night sky from both Vland and Terra (and Lair and Kirur for that matter) and becoming a 'resident' of the star system conveys a great deal of cachet. The Vilani called the star Nushua Kisha, roughly translated as 'Smouldering Giant'. The Ziru Sirka colonised its asteroid belt thousands of years before the Terrans developed the jump drive but their Solomani progeny eventually settled the system after defeating the Vilani in the Interstellar Wars.

It is officially led by a religious dictatorship but a soft one as dictatorships go. The system might better be classified as a balkanisation, with several rival governments operating out of different asteroid and artificial habitats, but all bow to the authority of the Red Destiny Sect, many more out of a desire for unity than piety. The sect believes the destiny of all life is to be consumed in the eventual supernova explosion of their host star and that their souls and those of their ancestors will be resurrected and made conscious again when the star's core subsequently collapses upon itself and it becomes a white dwarf. They believe



that the supernova event is imminent and therefore the days of destruction and rebirth are coming soon. There are billions who fully subscribe to the tenets of the Sect but many others do so more out of communal cohesion than faith. Occasionally the Sect throws its considerable political weight around, enforcing sectarian laws and reminding Antareans who the boss is, but few seem to care very much.

Antares is the sector capital and home to Archduke Brzk, the only non-human Archduke in the Imperium. He traces his lineage to Admiral Soegz, the first Vargr ever appointed to the exalted position of Archduke and is a member of the esteemed Order of Gvadakoung, a knightly order of Vargr nobility who meet at a deep space station in the Antares system. Politically, he walks a fine line between loyalty to the Emperor and recognition of Antarean independence. Antares is only five parsecs from the League of Antares, an Imperial Cultural Zone that was granted after the Julian War. The appointment was made to appease the victorious Julian Protectorate and quell anti-Imperial sentiment.

Antares B is the companion star of Antares. It is a B3 V blue-white main sequence star, orbiting at an approximate distance of 80 billion kilometres from the system primary, too distant to reach using sublight drives. Antares B has no planets of its own.

GUARDIANS OF THE RED DESTINY

Upon the arrival of their consciousness files at Antares, the expected embodiment is a collection of Guardians of the Red Destiny, the android military arm of the theocracy.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Guardian of the Red Destiny	5	24	Walker	7m	13	MCr2.6
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Athletics (endurance) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Melee (all) 1, Recon 3, Stealth 0					
Attacks	Fists (2D+1)					
Manipulators	2x (STR 9 DEX 8)*					
Endurance	324 hours					
Traits	ATV, Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision					
Programming	Very Advanced, INT 12					
Options	Android (enhanced), Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Drone Interface, PRIS Sensor, Transceiver, 5km (basic), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Olfactory Sensor (advanced)*					

* Vargr models swap characteristics, so they have STR 8 DEX 9. The also receive an advanced olfactory sensor attuned to typical Vargr sensitivity. The Vargr model costs MCr2.61.

Military service is a requirement for all citizens of Antares but members of the sect insist upon the use of android soldier proxies because violence is anathema to parishioners. Each member of the sect who is of age for compulsory service may appoint an android proxy, which is quite costly. Sect members who cannot afford this luxury are impressed into service but are labelled heretics. After their service is complete, they must engage in ritual cleansings that exorcise the sin of martial participation. There are billions of non-believers in Antares who voluntarily participate in the military, so both biological sophonts and androids serve side-by-side.

Guardian androids come in both Human and Vargr templates, reflecting the diversity of Antares. For each Traveller, roll 1D. On 1–5, the android in which they are embodied is the human template; on a 6 they receive the Vargr template. If this happens, they may experience the additional uncanny valley of awakening and living in the body of an alien species.

The Travellers may overwrite the android model's stock skill set with their own. For example, the Guardian androids have 10 total skill points. A Traveller may overwrite the android's skill programming with up to 10 skill points from among their own known skill levels. Therefore, a Traveller with Admin 2, Carouse 1, Deception 2, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Persuade 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, and Vacc Suit 1, has a total of 11 skill points to choose from and must select which 10 to upload to the android, sacrificing one point. Alternatively, they may leave one or more of the default android skill points in place as they see fit, limiting the application of their own skills even further but perhaps gaining desired skills that the android possesses.

The Travellers' consciousnesses may function in the robot brain for a limited amount of time, as described in Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

EMBODIMENTS, COUNTERMEASURES AND CONSEQUENCES

In this adventure, the Travellers awaken from a long consciousness transfer only to realise that they have already performed the mission... and failed!

Someone hacked Naalir's seemingly impregnable consciousness transfer protocol and infiltrated the group from within. The Travellers' embodiments were killed in action but their consciousness files have been installed into a new set of embodiments, giving them a second chance to complete the failed mission.

There are three ways to handle the Travellers' second embodiment.

The first is to assume that the Travellers find a new set of Guardians of the Red Destiny, the android soldiers used during the failed mission.

They might think it too risky to use the same type of embodiment, so Naalir finds other vessels for them. Roll on the Embodiment Mishap table on page 84 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* to find out what was found.

WHERE TO BEGIN

The Travellers had few leads about the location of the advanced processing multiplier when they sent their consciousnesses on the journey to Antares. All they have are its serial number, induction and transfer dates, and indications that it was sent to the scout base in the system over 30 years ago. Any number of things may have happened during the intervening decades.

If there are ex-scouts among the Travellers, they can reach out to the Scouts' Administrative Services department to track down the shipment. However, doing so is risky. Naalir managed to escape from the Imperial Research Directorate by unusual means. The conscious intellect was part of a highly classified program. Its history and the existence of its original components are also confidential information, secreted away at Research Station Omicron, Reference and in the archives of Naasirka, the Vilani bureaux that first studied the alien intelligence thousands of years ago.

Blundering into the IISS base and requesting data about top secret programmes might not be the best way to go about it. To be successful, they may need to use Allies, Contacts, Favour or some combination of all of these to get what they want without attracting unwanted attention. Before they even consider their strategy, they learn some shocking news about their mission.

MISSION FAILURE

After they awaken in new embodiments, the Travellers might want to find out what happened to their previous ones. For all they know, there are duplicate versions of their consciousnesses somewhere who are still trying to complete the mission.

Advanced security software from OmniShell, a private corporation headquartered on Squire (Antares 1625, A590ACA-F), detected the installation of their consciousness files into the Guardian androids. Beating Naalir's encryption capsule is not easy. The capsule is designed to reconstitute itself an unlimited number of times, spoofing, redirecting and confounding opposing security with its computational superiority. The lower-tech software had little chance of catching them.

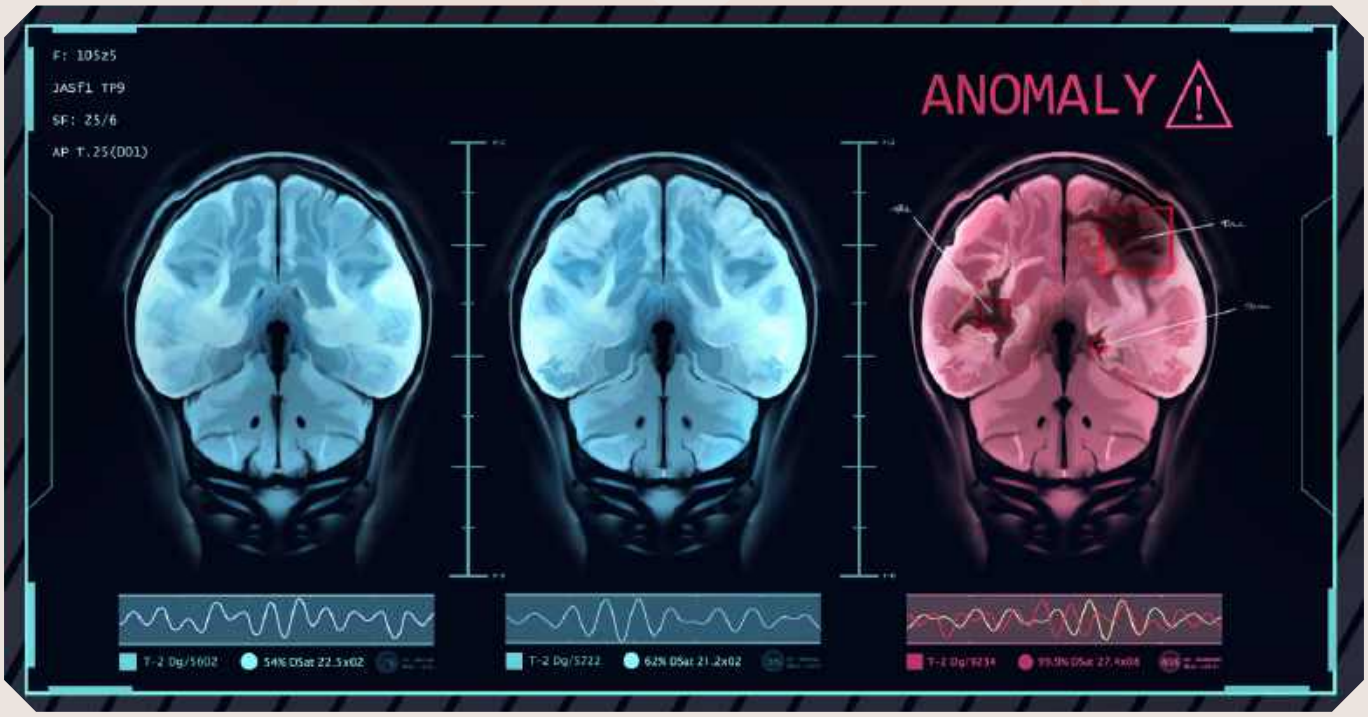
OmniShell did not detect the exact nature of the incursion but it did detect *something* unusual. Following the path of the Travellers' consciousnesses through the labyrinthine data networks of the Express Boat Network is next to impossible. The Packet Assembly and Reconstitution (PA/R) algorithm breaks the consciousness files up into millions of segments and reassembles them in such a way that they cannot be traced... and yet they were.

The flaw in the operation occurred because Naalir did not know that at the moment of embodiment, the Guardians of the Red Destiny are imbued with a 'spark of faith', an infusion of software code from a separate data system. When that moment was interfered with during the Travellers' embodiment, alarm bells went off in the system. The brain waves of the Travellers' consciousness files differ from those of the standard Guardian templates, so after embodiment, they stuck out like sore thumbs.

After the group of affected androids was identified, an intelligence officer by the name of Commander Redalobon 'Red' Hannihiguas was assigned to the case and infiltrated the group. Red is an agent of Trasilon, the Antarean intelligence agency.

LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

The Travellers' mission is the same. They were attempting to find clues about the location of Second Reference. The artefact containers on Reference pointed to Antares. From there, the Travellers will have to use their wits and skills to find what they are looking for. They know that their first attempt failed but forewarned is forearmed. If they can learn more about their failed mission, they might be able to succeed on their second attempt. Naalir's consciousness file software learned from its error, so this time, the Travellers consciousnesses have been installed without detection.



SECOND REFERENCE

The third is for the ambitious Referee who determines that countermeasures have been installed in the Guardian data network. These are designed to catch the consciousness files in the act of embodiment and destroy them during the attempt. Run a battle in the Sim, as described in Into the Sim on page 90 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. An appropriate scenario for the Sim might be breaking through the walls of a castle, penetrating a force field, or some other metaphor for battling through a prepared defence. Should the Travellers successfully defeat the countermeasures, they are successfully embodied in Guardian androids on Antares but they must be alert. They have not gone unnoticed and someone is trying to stop them.

DOUBLE AGENT

If the Travellers investigate the evidence (first-person accounts, media, police or military reports, and so on) that depicts their consciousnesses' first attempt at this mission, they discover that there was an additional member in their party. Their betrayer was Red, agent of Trasilon and loyal servant of Archduke Brzk. She was a female human. If they dig deeper, using security camera footage and other data, using the Investigate and Electronics (computer) skills (or perhaps a task chain using both), they can learn that she ultimately betrayed them, leading them into the trap that got them killed.

The Travellers might wonder how they allowed an infiltrator into their group. Red had technicians at Omnishell transmit a false memory into their wafer jacks that made them believe she was an ally. The ruse worked for a while but they ultimately figured out they were being deceived. Randomly determine which Traveller identified the mole or assign the one who makes the most sense. When they seemed to get suspicious, she led them into a trap. Red had wanted them alive for questioning but an overzealous Trasilon 'kill team' got into a deadly firefight with them. Posthumously, she extracted information from their wafer jacks, discovering that they intended to meet a mysterious contact aboard the *Sundiver*, a Red Destiny pilgrimage shuttle. This shuttle is designated to carry a group known as the Assemblage to partake in a religious ceremony within the photosphere of Antares.

Neither Red nor the Travellers know who the secret contact is, only that they will be present on the *Sundiver*. The secret contact is Sir Damian Calafiore, a disgruntled member of the nobility. He believes that someone is altering his memory... and he is correct. Only Brzk and a select few high-ranking nobles in the sector know of the existence of Second Reference, or as Brzk cryptically refers to it, 'the resource'. He uses agents equipped with wafer jacks to conduct missions, planting the necessary information in their minds and then erasing them when the mission is over. Sir Damian was one such agent but a technical mishap left some of his memories intact.

Brzk's spy network discovered that he has a leak but he does not know who it is. He assigned his most loyal agent, Red, to find out who it is.

When the embodied Travellers did not report back to the Express Boat Network for reintegration transfer, Naalir's surveillance software sought out new embodiments for them with an improved packet that learned from the Guardian embodiment vulnerability. Their new Guardian embodiments should be untraceable. As far as they know, no one knows they are here this time.

To get their mission back on track, they must either reconnect with Sir Damian, who operated under the pseudonym 'the Truth' when in contact with them, or they may track Red, who knows only that the mysterious leak should be on the *Sundiver* when it leaves for is pilgrimage to the photosphere of Antares.

MAKING CONNECTIONS

The Travellers' original embodiments infiltrated Scout Service Intelligence, which had been performing surveillance on Sir Damian. How they manage to obtain this information a *second* time can be accomplished several ways.

First, allow them to make a Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D days, INT) to determine that there is information to be obtained from the scouts. They may reach out to a Contact or Ally among the scouts or they could hack their intelligence data by making a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (1D hours, INT). The difficulty of the hacking attempt can be reduced to Difficult (10+) if they start with the Express Boat Network where their consciousnesses were stored and Naalir's software has already identified vulnerabilities that can be exploited.

The scout connection is the surest lead to Sir Damian but other agencies may also have had him under observation. Another possibility are the agents of the Red Destiny Sect. The sect is the ruling power in Antares system and they have a pervasive security apparatus. There might even be data to mine in the wafer jacks of the Guardian androids.

DOSSIER: SECOND REFERENCE

This is a summary of the Travellers' failed first attempt:

- Archduke Brzk and his inner circle are the only people who know about Second Reference, located on Vavkuk. He temporarily plants knowledge of the secret archive on the wafer jacks of his agents and then erases them after their missions are complete.
- One such agent, Sir Damian Calafiore, has phantom memories of Second Reference on his wafer jack and he realises his memories are being erased.
- The Travellers' consciousnesses arrived at Antares via the Express Boat Network and were installed on a squad of Guardians of the Red Destiny androids.
- The Travellers made inroads with the Antarean underworld and learned about someone calling themselves 'the Truth', who had information about Second Reference.
- Security firm OmniShell noticed some irregularities with the Travellers' Guardian units and reported the intel to Trasilon, the vaunted Antarean intelligence agency.
- Agent Red investigated the squad and had OmniShell implant a false memory in their wafers that she is their ally.
- The Travellers surreptitiously reached out to the Truth and were close to learning his identity.
- The OmniShell memory implant did not hold up and the Travellers figured out they had been infiltrated by Red.
- Before they could make contact with the Truth, they were killed by a Trasilon kill squad.
- The Travellers have had their consciousnesses reimplanted in new embodiments with the knowledge of their failed mission.

DIGGING FOR LEADS

Finding leads will require that the Travellers do some investigation. Their investigations might lead them to either Sir Damian or to Argaegh, the Vargr delegate to the Panoply of Antarean Sentience (see page 62).

Sir Damian knows about the botched mission. In fact, it has him terribly frightened. Like Brzk's other noble assets, he has a modicum of intelligence training but he did not expect to become involved in a harrowing spy thriller. He just wanted to get to the bottom of the implants in his memories. In the process, he inadvertently exposed the existence of Second Reference to outsiders.

The Travellers might need to find Sir Damian to determine the location of Second Reference but how does one find someone or something that might not want to be found? After arrival in Antares, allow them to make a series of Difficult (10+) Streetwise checks (D3 days, INT or SOC) to hunt for clues. This can take whatever form the Referee and the Travellers envision. The Antarean population is distributed among hundreds of artificial habitats, some of which are within hollowed-out asteroids and others built from the processed materials acquired from the belt.

Failure turns up no interesting information. Success reveals a rumour. Roll 2D on the Rumours table, adding the Effect of the check.

Many of the rumours described above can lead the Travellers to the information they need. If they delve deeper into the rumours, the code name '2R' keeps turning up. Second Reference is a secret but one that is protected by members of the Archduke's staff with high security clearances. In addition, their knowledge of the clandestine archive is protected by selective memory devices that only allow them to remember its location selectively. There is only one person who retains constant memory of its location: Archduke Brzk.

After a result has been determined, allow the Travellers to make a subsequent Difficult (10+) Investigate check (D3 days, INT) to obtain more information. Use a special method to determine the success of their task: Allow the Traveller who makes the check to roll 1D instead of 2D, adding their Investigate skill and INT DM. The Referee should roll the second dice, adding it to this total. In this way, the Traveller will have some idea of whether they have been successful or not but will not know whether they have succeeded or failed. Ultimately their success is at the whim of the Referee's dice roll. The Investigation table lists the results at various Effect levels.

Rumours

2D	Rumour
2–3	Archduke Brzk will be making a public appearance at Antares' second-most-populated residential habitat, Imar Adlaara. He is expected to announce the particulars of this year's Assemblage.
4–6	As above but the Travellers receive leaked information about the celebration this year: The Assemblage will attend a pilgrimage of the Red Destiny cult, taking the shuttle *Sundiver* to Antares, deep within the gravity well.
7–9	The Master of Ceremonies aboard the *Sundiver* is said to be employing never-before-seen technology to impress participants in the event. If the Travellers dig deeper on this rumour, they learn that this technology was brought to Antares aboard a mysterious ship called the *Dark Messenger*.
10–12	Guardians of the Red Destiny have not yet been selected for duty. If the Travellers have been embodied in Guardian androids, they might be able to get assigned.
13–15	A disgruntled member of Brzk's staff was the source of some of the leaks. She might be willing to give up additional information that could enable the Travellers to finagle their way aboard the shuttle.

Investigation

Effect	Result
-1 or less	Failure. The Travellers fail to find a suitable lead. Two consecutive failures garners the attention of Antarean law enforcement, who then contact and question the Travellers about their curiosity.
0	Marginal Success. The Travellers discover rumours that the mysterious Second Reference is known by the Duchess of Antares.
1–5	Average Success. Add DM+1 to a subsequent Investigate check. As above but they learn that the Duchess delegates much of her authority, and maintenance of the relationship with Second Reference (which she refers to covertly as '2R') to one of her knights, Sir Damian Calafiore, who also happens to be in charge of this year's Assemblage.
6 or more	Exceptional Success. Add DM+2 to a subsequent Investigate check. As above but they also learn that Sir Damian knows about their failed mission and is taking extra steps to protect the secret of Second Reference.

Some of the most populated and well-known asteroid habitats include the following. If the Travellers want to obtain leads about Second Reference at any of these sites, allow them to make a subsequent Very Difficult (12+) Streetwise check (1D days, INT or SOC). Note that the Travellers may use a specific type of earned Favour at each asteroid (or group thereof) that they visit at double the DM. For example, one point of Favour may be applied as DM+2.

- **Antares Starport** – This moon-sized rock contains Antares' enormous starport and hosts 100 million people. It has a somewhat oblong shape, about 950 kilometres in diameter at its broadest girth.
- **Admiral Richemba Auvaunz Naval Base** – The system's Imperial Naval Base, headquarters of the 157th Fleet. If any of the Travellers are veterans of the navy, this might be a valuable resource.
  Diameter: 500 kilometres.
  Favour: Political Favour may be doubled here if there is a naval veteran among the Travellers.
- **Flor imdt Magi Scout Base** – The system's IISS base, located on an asteroid with a somewhat eccentric orbit.
  Diameter: 450 kilometres.
  Favour: Political Favour may be doubled here if there is a retired scout among the Travellers.
- **Temple of the Red Destiny** – Contains the central church of the Antarean religion. Since pilgrimages to the photosphere of Antares are so popular, it also contains a shipyard that specialises in the construction of ships that can make the trip in relatively short order using high-powered manoeuvre drives, supplemented by auxiliary chemical-rocket drives.
  Diameter: 400 kilometres
  Favour: Influencer Favour may be doubled here.

- **The Scorpius Cluster** – A group of small- to mid-sized asteroids that contain the system's primary industrial and financial assets. The word 'cluster' is perhaps a bit of a stretch. These objects are millions of kilometres from each other but their relative orbits and lack of eccentricity put them in a perceivable grouping.
  Diameter: 100–350 kilometres
  Favour: Wealth and Criminal Favour may be doubled here.

One way or another, the Travellers are likely to be led to the Assemblage, where they may find a contact who knows all about what they seek: Second Reference.

THE ASSEMBLAGE

When the Travellers arrive at Antares, preparations are under way for a celebration called 'The Assemblage', which includes parties, expositions, demonstrations and conferences that emphasise the cultural traditions of the sector's many alien species and their shared contributions to its history and success. Many of Antares' billions use it as a great excuse to have a big party. Inter-asteroid transit routes are doubled in frequency and cost and the system welcomes millions of visitors from neighbouring star systems.

The Assemblage is held once every five standard years. It is the brainchild of Archduke Brzk and the event has become exceedingly popular with each new edition. This Assemblage is the fifth and it is referred to as Assemblage 5 or 'A5'. It is a big deal, with many events held at multiple locations but this year's celebration is centred on the pilgrimage to Antares. This is exciting for the Red Destiny cult, whose practices are usually strictly kept separate from secular society. Bringing the two together is both a validation of the religion and an acknowledgement of a desire to establish greater social acceptance and empathy for those with different beliefs.

One of the key events of A5 is the Panoply of Antarean Sentience, a panel of 11 sophonts, one from each species of the sector. Humaniti, who make up the majority of the sector's population, are the hosts of the event. The Anlisleans, Githiasko and Vargr, who are Antares' other native sophonts, are invited guests. The Azhanti and Cassildan are native humans who send representatives. Also included are genetically recreated members of each of the sector's four dead sophont species (also referred to as the 'artificials'): the Sokorrin, the Sabmiqys, the Kaski and the Urunishani, complete with simulated personalities based on records of their long-lost cultures.

PLUG AND PLAY

The four artificials all have neural jacks with Angin wafers. It would be relatively easy to download the Travellers' consciousnesses into these clones. All they would have to do is reintegrate their current consciousness files with those of the Express Boat Network mail array and then have them installed in the wafer jacks remotely.

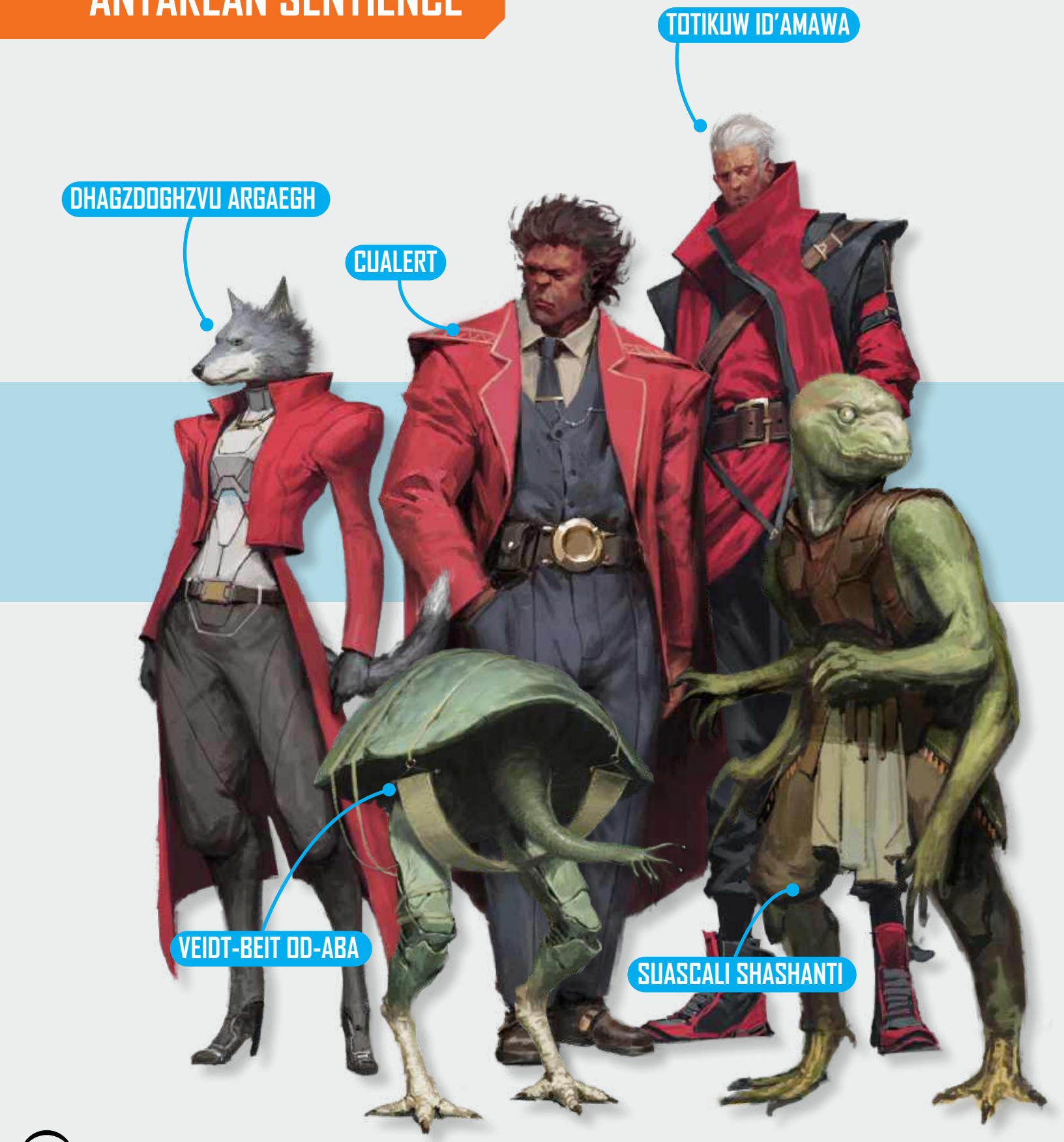
The embodiment header in each of their files can be reconfigured to make a 'hostile takeover' of any of the clones. Have the Travellers make a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (1D hours, EDU) for each takeover attempt. The timeframe indicates how long it takes to reintegrate and configure the PA/R algorithm but once installed, the takeover is instantaneous. If they succeed, the desired Traveller's consciousness is installed in the wafer jack of the desired clone and the Traveller suddenly 'wakes up' in the body. If it fails, the Traveller remains 'unembodied' and may make a second attempt to reconfigure the file by using the same check.

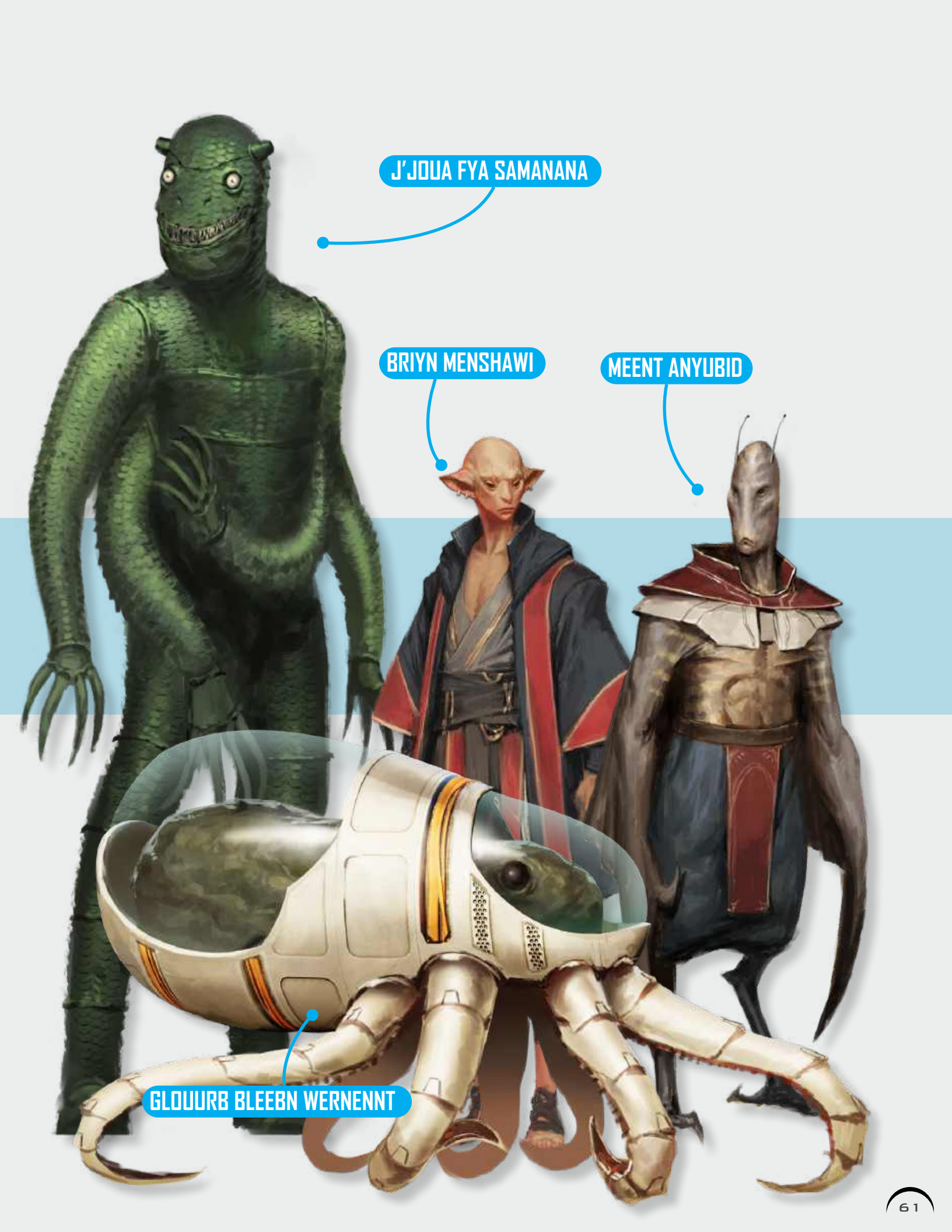
For what it is worth, the personas currently installed in the artificials are merely software programs operated by Very Advanced robot brains. They are not self-aware, although they do a fine job of pretending they are. That might assuage any guilt the Travellers have about overwriting them.

Of course, they have the option of remaining in their Guardian clones for the entire operation but should they see value in using one or more of the Assemblage clones, the following guidelines will help them do it. Keep in mind that the Traveller's consciousness cannot be installed into two embodiments simultaneously in the same place without potentially disastrous consequences. Refer to Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information.

Challenge the Travellers to operate within the biological confines of their host bodies. While their individual personas remain intact, being in an alien body creates certain biological imperatives that will be different from what they feel in their source bodies or the 'human' Guardian clones.

THE PANOPLY OF ANTAREAN SENTIENCE




J'JOUA FYA SAMANANA
BRIYN MENSHAWI
MEENT ANYUBID
GLOUURB BLEEBN WERNENNT

The Assemblage includes the following individuals.

VEIDT-BEIT OD-ABA

The Anlislean species are native to Anlislea (Antares 0916, E787997-3). Long ago in their history, the Anlisleans had created a mid-level technological and industrial society that had begun to cause severe environmental damage to their world. Collectively they reversed much of the damage and deliberately regressed to a pre-industrial state, saving their world.

Playing the Anlislean: Od-aba is an ascetic, eschewing the supposed virtues of consumptive industrial societies, preferring a simpler life based on the pursuit of knowledge and time spent with family and friends. Anthropomorphically speaking, he comes off as judgmental and opinionated, although in his mind, he is merely sharing the wisdom of his species. He speaks (sings would be a better word) fluent Galanglic but with an odd, buzzing accent.

BRIYN MENSHAWI

The Azhanti are a Minor human species engineered for the environment of Irale (Antares 2315, B898998-B). They are slightly shorter than most other lines of Humaniti, completely hairless, have orange-brown skin, brown eyes and somewhat larger ears. Internally, their tracheas have been altered to process the sulphurous taint of their homeworld. Briyn is a notable, award-winning poet and proud representative of his people. He is particularly fascinated by the members of the dead Antarean species.

Playing Menshawi: Be inquisitive, poetic and fascinated with the mysteries of life and death. He is prone to bouts of morosity.

TOTIKUW ID'AMAWA

The Cassildan Minor humans hail from Ambemshan (Antares 0216, A5457BC-B). Genetically engineered by the Ancients to thrive on a small, low-gravity world, Cassildans average two metres in height. Prior to discovery by the Vilani, they were warlike, battling over the world's limited resources. The Vilani brought them order and discipline, vastly altering their culture.

Playing Totikuw: Be quick to take offence but dismiss insults as cultural misunderstandings. You want to fight but restrain your inner nature for the betterment of civilisation. Talk about how you would bring order to a disorderly galaxy if only you had the chance. Do not smile much but when you do, it is in response to things that are not typically thought of as funny or amusing.

GLOUURB BLEEBN WERNENNT

The delegate from Githiaski (Antares 2406, A789986-D) is a member of the deep sea sophont species called the Githiasko. They cannot survive in standard-pressure gaseous environments; thus, Glouurb wears a protective suit, designed to keep pressure and moisture at comfortable levels.

Playing Glouurb: She loves to talk about her career in the Scout Service and all the waterworlds she has explored during her time with the scouts. She is an advocate for the advancement of aquatic species and the uplift of others. To be relatable, she talks extensively about how many uplifted Dolphin friends she has, knowing that the species originated from the human homeworld.

MEENT ANYUBID

The Kaski were mammaloid gliders whose habitations, urban centres and places of worship were nestled in the valleys of their homeworld where the air was denser. The abundant ruins they left behind are hardy, stone structures that are still used today. They independently reached a high Tech Level long before being discovered by Vilani scouts and had a spacefaring society that had settled several of the other planets and gas giant moons of their star system, leaving myriad ruins behind. It is unclear what killed them off but archaeologists suggest that they may have been deliberately eliminated.

Playing Meent: Speak of stolen opportunities. Be vague about it – do not directly accuse the Vilani – but you feel your species was robbed of its chance to have a place among other starfaring sophonts. The durability and beauty of the structures you left behind is a testament to the resilience and power of the Kaski.

J'JOUA FYA SAMANANA

The Sabmiqys (Antares 2117, A560056-H) were killed by a virus in -8000. Early explorers to the world were killed by the advanced robots the Sabmiqys left behind. Today, the world is interdicted. Antares' geneticists had few resources for the re-creation of a Sabmiqys. The clone was built using accounts of surviving visitors to their world and scant genetic material.

Playing J'joua: The Sabmiqys are alien... *very* alien. Answer questions with strange, unrelated philosophical responses and confused facial expressions. Make little eye contact and exist in a dreamy, semi-connected state. Talk about amazing TL17 inventions that do not exist anywhere else in Charted Space. Occasionally describe the horrors of a virus that killed all of your kind within a week. Keep in mind that the Sabmiqys are nearly three metres tall, so you tower over whoever you speak with.

SUASCALI SHASHANTI

The Sokorrin of Luolilali (Antares 0210, C566475-9) may have originated from nearby Llupi. An intelligent species similar to the Sokorrin were present on Llupi and the record of their existence on Luolilai appears rather suddenly in the fossil record, making it somewhat dubious that it is their native world. The ruins on Llupi indicate that they may have been an avian species but on Luolilai there is no indication that they had the ability to fly. The reason for their extinction is unknown.

Playing Suascali: Be highly adaptable and gregarious. You know that your species was somehow wiped out and you are curious to learn what may have happened. Ask a lot of questions about the stability and hardiness of Imperial society. Will it stand the test of time? Life can be ephemeral. It is best to live in the moment and appreciate what one has now.

CUALERT

The Urunishani originate from Gashagi (Antares 0727, E786200-8), which was once theorised by the Vilani to have been the homeworld of Humaniti. Unlike Vland, which had no place for Humaniti in the fossil record, Gashagi had animals of numerous species with similar biology to humans; whales, primates and rodents to name a few, probably seeded there by the Ancients. An ice age killed off these Minor humans before evolution completely developed them into a semblance of modern *homo sapiens*, so Cualert appears to be a primitive human in modern attire.

Playing Cualert: Grunt and stoop a lot but then be surprisingly eloquent. Discuss palaeontology and archaeology like an expert. You know that your world was once thought to be the origin of Humaniti, which you dismiss as ridiculous. You have an interest in seeing your homeworld but sadly you express doubt that such a thing will be permitted. Proudly sport the latest fashion, oblivious to your 'caveman' appearance.

DHAGZDOGHZVU ARGAEGH

Argaegh is a Vargr from Sanoet (Antares 1915, C96A943-A), where she serves on the Antarean Sophont Rights Board, a watchdog organisation that looks for violations of Imperial law and sophonts rights throughout the Imperium. She is not fond of cloning, so if the Travellers are embodied in Guardian clones (or another variety for that matter), she becomes interested in them and asks a lot of questions. She cites the law of Emperor Paulo II that prohibited consciousness transfer. She is appalled by the cloning of the three dead species but cannot help being fascinated by them.

Playing Argaegh: She is actually a spy from Kodhnozek (Antares 3201, A661696-A), a world of the Rukadukaz Republic, which is a member state of the Julian Protectorate. While she does care about sophonts rights, it is a cover for her espionage activities. Argaegh knows that Second Reference is on Vavkuk but she does not know its exact location on the planet, nor much about its contents. She is seeking allies in her quest to find it, so she might make a good friend for the Travellers.

THE FIRES OF ANTARES

Pilgrimages into the deep gravity well of Antares typically make stops at each of its two inner planets and then to the pulsation zone of the star itself, where one can tempt fate, bathing in the searing flames of a swelling red giant. Throughout the nearly month-long voyage, parishioners pray to their god, study its most minute details in the sacred observatory and sing hymns to their star's greatness. Being on a pilgrimage shuttle is an unforgettable experience, perhaps even more so for non-believers who bear witness to the rituals and eccentricities of a star-worshipping cult.

The advent of the pilgrimage to Antares' pulsating prominences begins with great fanfare. The Travellers might be reminded of their days as the custodians of the *Ventura Fortuna*. While the *Sundiver* lacks the elegance and finery of the luxury liner, the ship's reflective hull, crisp appointments and modern design give it an irresistible sheen.

PUNCHING THEIR TICKET

How the Travellers get aboard the *Sundiver* is up to them. If they are embodied in Guardians, they may insert themselves as the security team. Guard duty for this voyage is highly sought after and will require some angling by the Travellers to get the job. Let them use their array of combat skills, Electronics (computer), Deception, Carouse and other applicable skills to get the assignment. Put them in double-occupancy and let them have nearly full run of the ship.

Using Guardian embodiments for roles other than on-board security will take some creativity and planning. The android bodies are designed to look as such with seams and markers that clearly identify them as artificial beings. However, with an appropriate body covering (including a hood or head scarf of some sort) and a successful Difficult (10+) Deception check (INT), they can pass for whatever role the Travellers have created for themselves. If they have been embodied in another type of vessel, they may create whatever sort of disguise they want.

As a side note, if the Travellers do not use Guardian embodiments, other Guardians will be assigned as the security team. The Travellers will have in-depth knowledge of the design and configuration of the androids based on the fact that in their first attempt at this mission, they inhabited Guardian clones.

ITINERARY

The voyage to the Antarean pulsation zone is a long one. Making a complete round trip requires about two months, which might be more than the Travellers bargained for.

There are two competing itineraries aboard the shuttle; those of the Red Destiny cult and those of the Assemblage. There are journalists present to record the actions and events of both parties but they favour the Assemblage.

The cult is the ruling authority in the Antares system, with billions of adherents. Despite its power, secular agencies look down upon the religion, dismissing it for its derivative biblical texts and contradictory passages. The cult features an odd mix of scientific study and belief in the supernatural. The educated elites of Antares respect the cult's power but they admonish its priesthood for pushing 'magical thinking'. One day, Antares will go supernova and the idea that some sort of deliverance shall occur on that day is seen as ridiculous to the system's agnostic naysayers.

Most of the itinerary is self-explanatory but a few events need further clarification.

The high supper is a bountiful meal fed by the cultists to all aboard. The meal is long and extravagant, with seven courses. It is a grand opportunity for the Travellers to meet and greet all who are aboard.

Preparations for the rapture include times of prayer, fasting and rituals in advance of their approach to the surface of the star.

For the starwalk, the cultists don special, heat-shielded hostile-environment vacc suits and go for a stroll on the hull (protected by the *Sundiver's* own heat shields, of course). The path they choose is predetermined and designed for safety. Exposing oneself to the violent lashes of the star is not recommended; however, the illusion that one is doing so plays well with the pilgrims and adds drama to their experience. A forecast is made using the observatory to confirm the safety of the walk.

Day	Red Destiny	Assemblage
0	Boarding and call to prayer	First assembly and photo op
1	Blessings and hymns	Sir Damian gives his keynote speech
5	The high supper	Assemblage press conference
10–15	Preparation for the rapture	Assemblage conference is held
20–25	Starwalk	Presentation of the cultures
26–28	Completion of the pilgrimage	Scientific study of the expansion zone

Stellar Proximity Vacc Suit: The stellar proximity (SP) vacc suit is similar to the HEV vacc suits in the *Central Supply Catalogue*. It provides additional protection for hostile environments but it is specialised for use in the close proximity of a star. The SP vacc suit provides additional protection against heat and radiation, including indefinite protection at temperatures of up to 1,000°C and 500 rads. At temperatures between 1,000–2,000°C and up to 750 rads, it provides protection for 3D minutes, after which its systems begin to break down at great danger to the wearer. The suit is bulky, inflicting DM-1 to all physical actions.

Presentation of the cultures is one of the main events of the voyage for the Assemblage. Each member gives a performance, lecture or other demonstration to celebrate their unique contribution to Antares and its culture.

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

The Travellers' participation in the events depends on how they have chosen to join the expedition. Regardless of their role on the ship, at some point they witness the following events, which might give them an opening to get what they have come for.

Sir Damian meticulously watches over the members of the Assemblage, micromanaging them and annoying them from time-to-time with his overt attentions. The Travellers will witness this on more than one occasion. They might also note that he pays special attention to the four artificials. He makes a daily check of their wafer jacks, allegedly performing some sort of test or maintenance.

If the Travellers get to know Sir Damian and they ask about his work with the Assemblage, he cynically informs them that 'Yes, it's my job to take care of the Archduke's circus. One of my many chores.' He never responds in the positive about his duties but seems dedicated to carrying them out. When spoken to, he seems demotivated but his actions convey enthusiasm.

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Stellar Proximity Vacc Suit	+14	12	500	40	Cr25000	Vacc Suit 1

HACKING THE WAFER JACKS

As mentioned above, Sir Damian spends an inordinate amount of time tampering with the wafer jacks of Meent, J'joua, Suascali and Cualert, each of whom allows the frequent intrusions of their personal space. Every so often, each of the clones exhibits a tic of some sort. An odd spasm, repetitive speech, cantering movement or some other tell-tale sign that something is not quite right. Occasionally, Sir Damian is seen taking one of them to the ship's workshop for diagnosis and repair. They comply submissively, seemingly aware that they are playing a role for the event.

Meanwhile, Argaegh, the Vargr delegate to the Panoply, is spying on Sir Damian. Argaegh already knows more about Second Reference than Sir Damian does but it has been difficult for her to obtain detailed information about it. The inquisitive knight has not exactly been 100-percent secretive in his search for more information. His outreach to the intelligence community caught her attention and she is hoping to use him to gain access to Second Reference so she can report its contents to the Rukadukaz Republic. Catching her in the act will not be easy but the Travellers can do so by making an opposed Recon check versus her Stealth.

If the Travellers present proper credentials and a viable cover story, they too may be given access to the clones' wafer jacks. The artificials are not fully independent and are programmed to submit to authority. They will permit the Travellers to examine them if they seem to be viable officials.

An examination reveals that the wafer jack of each clone contains an encrypted data file. If the Travellers may make a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (2D minutes, INT) to hack the encryption, they may gain access to it. Intrusion software (refer to the *Central Supply Catalogue*) can be used to improve their chances. If they successfully break in, they discover that the data file is one of four interlocking files. The other three are contained in the other clones' wafer jacks.

Hacking into subsequent wafer jacks is easier since the encryption module is identical. Reduce the difficulty to Average (8+) for subsequent hacking attempts on the other clones. The data files may be copied and collected on a device in the Travellers' possession, enabling them to combine the interlocking files.

Note that failure on any hacking attempts sets off an alarm that immediately notifies Sir Damian of the attempt. He will come running, cutlass and pistol in hand, to see what has transpired. The knightly caretaker is using the clones to store a data file that he hopes will reveal the secret plans of his boss, Archduke Brzk. See Short-term Memory Loss on page 70 for more information.

If Sir Damian catches the Travellers in the act in this manner, all is not lost. If the Travellers make a successful Difficult (10+) Persuade check (SOC if the Travellers try to make friends with the knight; STR if they try to intimidate him), they may convince him to confess his plan or to ally with them.

SUNDIVER, ANTAREAN INTRA-SYSTEM SHUTTLE

Travelling in-system in Antares requires a multifaceted spacecraft that can make long hauls into the inner system and microjumps along its outer perimeter. Antares' enormous gravity well makes it challenging to travel to the inner system since the star's jump shadow is approximately 100 billion kilometres. A powerful manoeuvre drive makes travel to the inner system marginally more bearable.

The shuttle is equipped with heat shielding to protect its occupants from Antares upon close approach. It also includes an observatory to make observations of the star during approach and an expansive commons area, complete with broad tinted viewing portals for observation of Antares and its two planets during a cruise. There is a chapel for prayer and meditation.

The shuttle has a pinnace to drop off passengers at either planet or if an emergency return flight is required for any of the passengers or crew. Once the shuttle is enroute deep into the gravity well of Antares during a pilgrimage, it rarely returns until its cruise is complete.

A freighter variant foregoes the two luxury staterooms, 10 or 20 of the standard staterooms and all of the low berths, adding additional cargo space.

TL13		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	800 tons, Close Structure	—	32
	Heat Shielding	—	80
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 2	30	6
M-Drive	Thrust 7	56	112
J-Drive	Jump 1	25	37.5
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 750	50	50
Fuel Tanks	J-1 x2, 16 weeks of operation	180	—
Bridge		20	4
Computer	Computer/5	—	0.03
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Biosphere (5 people)	2.5	0.5
	Chapel	20	2
	Medical Bay	4	2
	Small Observatory (enhanced)	100	125
	Ram Scoops (65 tons/week)	13	3.25
	Fuel Processors (20 tons/day)	1	0.05
	Workshop	6	0.9
Staterooms	Luxury x2	20	3
	Standard x30	120	15
	Low Berths x5	2.5	0.25
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Jump Control/1	—	0.1
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
Common Areas		80	8
Cargo		25	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineer, Medic

Hull: 120

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

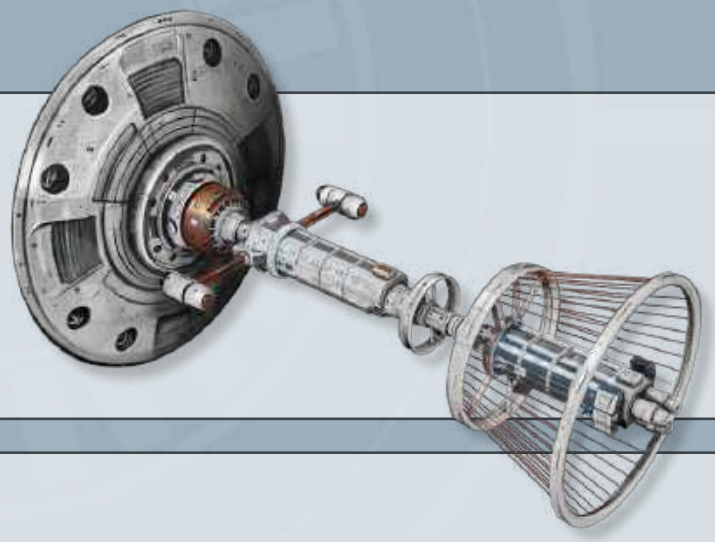
Cr42105/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr505.26

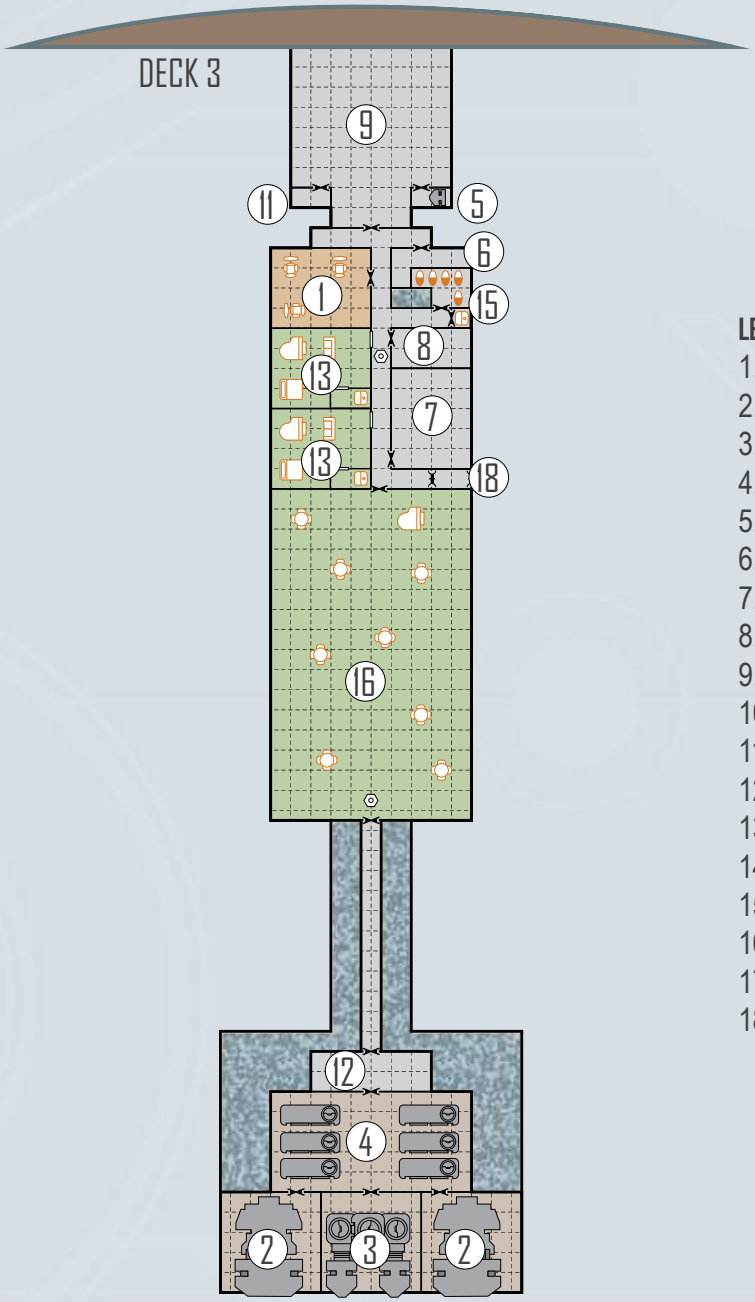
Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	160
Manoeuvre Drive	560
Jump Drive	80
Sensors	1
Fuel Processor	1
Biosphere	3
Medical Bay	1
Low Berths	1



SUNDIVER, ANTAREAN INTRA-SYSTEM SHUTTLE

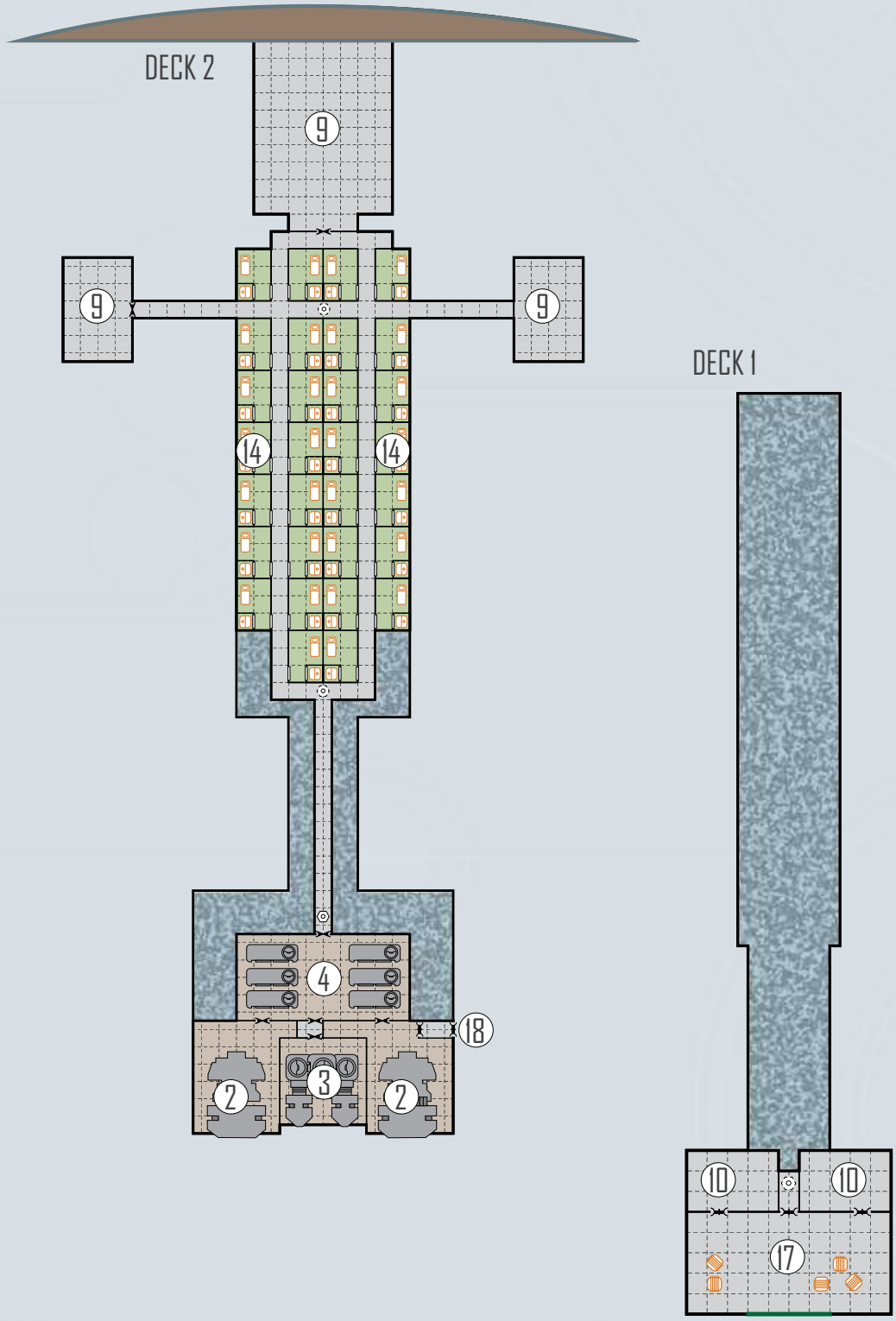
1 square = 0.5 Ton



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Sensors
6. Biosphere
7. Chapel
8. Medical bay
9. Small observatory
10. Ram scoops
11. Fuel processors
12. Workshop
13. Luxury staterooms
14. Staterooms
15. Low berths
16. Common areas
17. Cargo
18. Airlock

SUNDIVER, ANTAREAN INTRA-SYSTEM SHUTTLE



SHORT-TERM MEMORY LOSS

Archduke Brzk is the guardian of Second Reference. It is the privilege of the Archduke to protect the secret. However, maintenance of such an important site cannot be done alone, so he frequently enlists the aid of loyal agents; his cadre of nobles – the Duke of Antares (system, not sector), its counts and its knights (one of whom is Sir Damian Calafiore), and various ministers and military officers. Brzk uses a special security mechanism to ensure that each of them cannot compromise the location of the site on Vavkuk: implanted short-term memories.

When Brzk assigns a Second Reference mission, the knowledge of that mission has a limited lifespan. Missions are implanted in the brains of his agents via a special device. When the mission is complete, the implanted knowledge of the mission disappears from their minds. In this way, the danger of a leak is minimised. When subsequent missions are assigned to the same person, the recipient remembers their previous missions. However, when that subsequent mission is completed, the agent forgets all of the missions again... most of the time. Sometimes there is a flaw in the deletion process for agents who have performed numerous missions. These flaws are called 'shadows'. Sometimes the agent has vague recollections of their mission, and sometimes they retain concrete memories, but they never remember the whole thing. When agents experience shadows, they are instructed to report them to Brzk and then go through a secondary erasure process. Duty-bound agents do so without question.

While not completely fault-free, the system has worked thus far. On his last mission, Sir Damian retained a shadow but it was an unusual one. He does not remember anything about the mission itself but does recall details about the implantation process, and he has become obsessed with learning more about it. He had the shadow copied from his wafer jack, broken up into four pieces, and installed on the wafer jacks of the Assemblage artificials for safe keeping. He has a contact with OmniShell, the Antarean computer security firm located on Aspída, who has promised to help him unravel the mystery with top-notch decryption software.

Unfortunately, each of the shadow files has begun to develop corruption sequences, basically the same self-destruct algorithms that were intended to cause their erasure from the mind of the Sir Damian. He is doing everything he can to preserve the files so that he can solve the mystery at Aspída. The corruption sequences are dormant portions of the files and Damian does not have the expertise to eradicate them; all he can do is reboot the files when he begins to see the clones exhibiting symptoms of the corruption. Symptoms include tics or sometimes a complete shutdown of the clone's wafer jack.

The tics suffered by the clones begin to cause problems with the ceremonies as the artificials start having behavioural defects. Sir Damian's choice to use their wafer jacks for storage seems to have backfired. His gambit might ruin the Panoply event unless someone intervenes.

A Traveller with sufficient skill in Electronics (computers) might be able to delete or shut down the corruption sequence in each file so that they can be preserved long enough to get them to Aspída. Clearly, Sir Damian is having difficulties and if no one intervenes, all four of the corrupted files will be destroyed long before they reach the planet. If the Travellers have the expertise, they might be able to trade their skills for knowledge about Second Reference.

If the Travellers can prevent the loss of the data on the wafer jacks, they discover that Cualert's wafer has information that leads them directly to the site of Second Reference on Vavkuk. However, only by combining the four pieces can they discover the exact location of the advanced processing multiplier.

If the Travellers make a move to acquire the data stored in the artificials, determine whether they attract the attention of Sir Damian in the process. The inquisitive knight believes that he can use the information he has stored in the wafer jacks to uncover one of the Imperium's great mysteries; the proven existence of Second Reference. He is not certain what he will do with the information once he has it but thinks that possession of this information will give him a powerful marker in the game of Imperial politics. He believes that he can keep the clones functional until they arrive at Aspída. He is mistaken. The corruption of the shadow data held within their wafer jacks is accelerating quickly. Without assistance, he has little hope of preserving them for the duration of the voyage.

BACK TO ANTARES

If they manage to acquire the data, the Travellers can return to Antares to arrange for a jump to Vavkuk, five parsecs away. While Vavkuk is an Imperial client state, the local government has laws against the import of hundreds of Antarean technologies to prevent their neighbour from performing surveillance, or influencing or otherwise asserting authority over their government. This includes Guardian androids, in which the Travellers may be embodied. They will have to either find a way to illegally enter the system in their android bodies or inhabit other less ostentatious embodiments.

Getting to Vavkuk could be tricky if the Travellers do not find a ship with decent jump capability and collapsible fuel tanks. Otherwise, they might need to find another way there. One option is to abandon their current embodiments and install their consciousness files on the mail array of a mysterious ship called the *Dark Messenger*, a secret ship of the Express Boat Network fleet. Naalir's travel packet can upload their consciousness files to the ship with ease but doing so would mean allowing themselves to be re-embodied on whatever vessels are available on Vavkuk. Given the planet's relatively low Tech Level and restrictions, their choices will be few but it does ensure their transit will be confidential.

The return flight to Antares may require several weeks, depending on how far into the voyage they are. If they stay with the *Sundiver* for the entire voyage, they will be aboard the ship for 56–60 days, which will be a stretch for the endurance of their embodiments. Refer to Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. If they manage to get what they need earlier in the voyage, they may depart in the pinnace, provided they come up with a reasonable reason to take it. There is also the option of using the *Sundiver's* jump drive within the 100-diameter limit, which can be done at increased risk of a misjump. Doing so would require a reason and nothing short of an emergency will get Sir Damian to end the voyage early. The Assemblage is an important event and scuttling the trip would cause an enormous loss of face for the ambitious knight.

VAVKUK

Even at five parsecs away, Antares is prominent in the daytime sky of Vavkuk. When seen in conjunction with Vavkuk's red-dwarf primary, Ashu, it almost looks like a binary pair. Antares' red disc glows even brighter when seen from Vavkuk's dark side, giving the illusion that the planet is between the two stars. Little wonder the Vavkukians have always felt that they wither under its burning gaze and cannot escape its influence.

The translation of Vavkuk, a Vilani name, is something akin to 'dead end', highly apropos given its astrographic circumstances. The presence of the duplicate archive and its unique collection of artefacts is unknown to almost everyone there – that is, everyone but the small army of loyalists and robots who defend and maintain the secret installation, far from the civilised region of the planet.

The Reference data is deemed so valuable that it must be vigilantly guarded and maintained. Should the Imperium ever fall into decline as the Ramshackle Empire did, which ushered in the Long Night, the twin archives could be used to restore interstellar civilisation. It was deemed crucial that the very *public* archive at Reference be duplicated at a secure, remote, and most of all obscure star system outside the boundaries of the Imperium. Despite its humble status, Vavkuk is a very important Imperial client state.

Vavkuk is a cold world... very cold. Its low temperatures allow for methane oceans, which cover half its surface. The atmosphere has high methane content as well, giving it a murky, bluish-green tint from space. It is tidally locked to Ashu, which casts an orange glow through the haze. Its dense clouds permit little direct light to touch the surface.

There are 30 million people living on Vavkuk, not a small number given its isolation in the Lesser Rift, but it is a big planet with a great deal of surface area. The initial colonies had higher technology but Vavkuk is far from the trade lanes. It did not receive the bounty of interstellar trade that is the lifeblood of growth and development. Over time, it settled to a pedestrian TL8, just enough to survive its harsh environment. Its population lives in subterranean habitats and under protective domes, virtually all of which are in the twilight zone, the region between the day and night sides of the planet. Travel between habitations is by subsurface trains, ATVs and grav vehicles, but the latter are mostly old models, meticulously maintained by the elite class who own them.

Deep on the dark side of the planet, far from the dim light of its star, is Second Reference, a sprawling secret base that was placed there centuries ago on the remote island of Glacyr. Second Reference gives off no light and the few surface structures that it has use stealth technology to conceal their presence from the

VAVKUK

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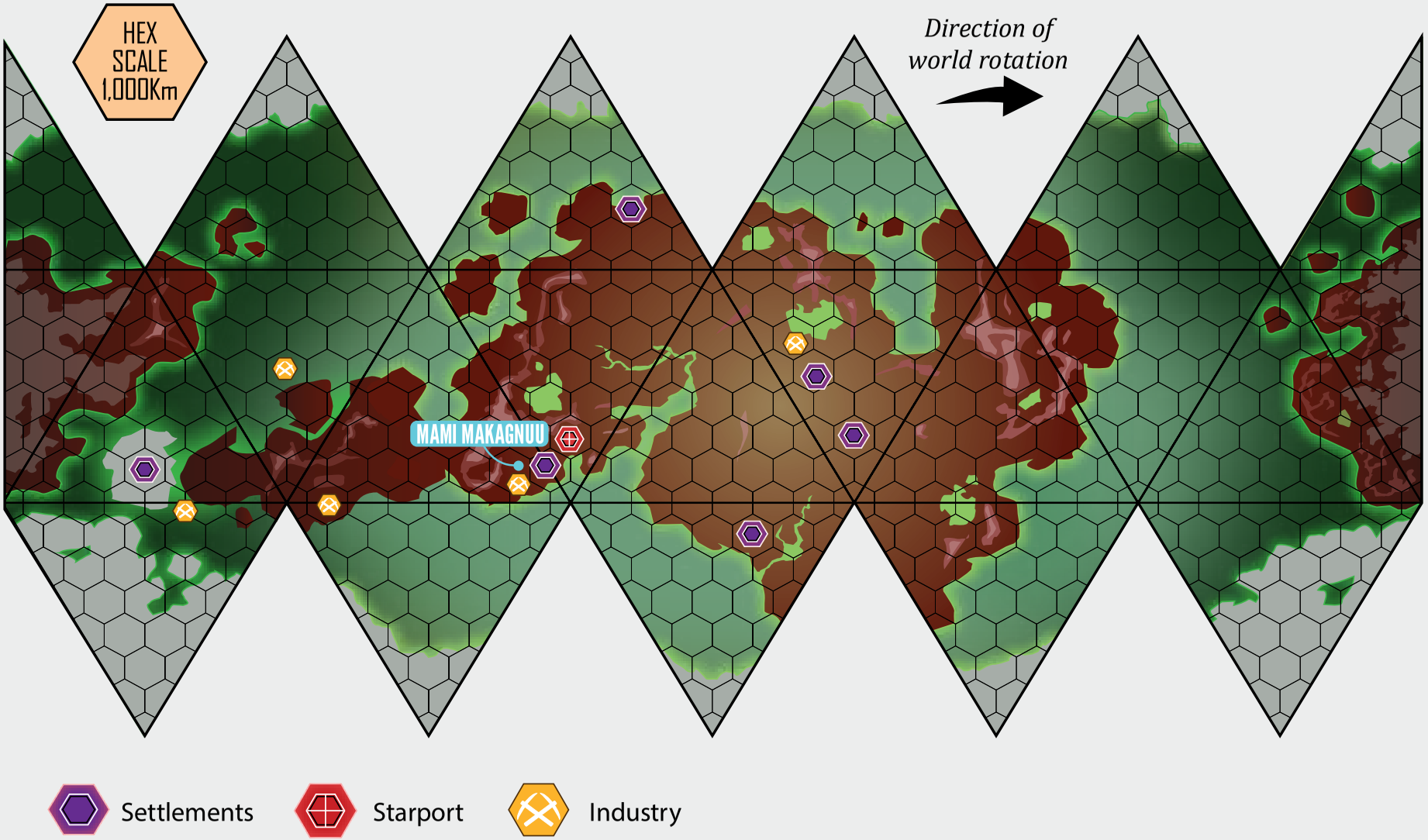


low-tech sensor equipment of the Vavkukians. No one outside the installation has ever known about it... until now. A disturbance on the island has alerted the people of its capital city of Mami Makagnuu to their presence.

The final leg of the voyage to Second Reference will be unconventional. If the Travellers choose to re-embody on Vavkuk, their consciousnesses will not travel aboard the mail arrays of a standard x-boat – which has a range of only four parsecs – but aboard a variant of the class designed for greater distances. The *Dark Messenger*, out of Antares, carries the news into the Lesser Rift to the Vavkuk system, home to Second Reference. While there are no known refuelling stations between Antares and Vavkuk, rumour has it there is a station in empty hex 0221 of the Empty Quarter, enabling the *Dark Messenger* to reach distant Sambra and Faiza. If so, only the pilots of the stealthy ship and IISS Intelligence know about it.

If the Travellers choose to remain in the same embodiments, they will have to be careful. Guardian androids are not permitted on Vavkuk. There have been conflicts between the Antareans and the Vavkukians, and the ruling oligarchy no longer trusts Antares. For this reason, they do not permit members of the Antarean military – the most obvious of whom are the Guardians – in their star system. It might be wise to look for alternative vessels. Doing so will be tricky. The Travellers have never reintegrated their consciousnesses without the help of Naalir which remains in the Core. Since the consciousness files contained in the travel packet cannot be altered, the Travellers will have to store the memories and data they have acquired during the mission and figure out a way to inform their new embodiments of what they have accomplished thus far. Such is the complex operation of a consciousness-transfer mission.

The Referee may optionally allow the Travellers to make a one-time Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (D3 days, EDU) to integrate their consciousnesses before having them sent to Vavkuk.

Vavkuk has three moons, the most distant of which approaches its own size and imposes extraordinary tidal effects on the planet. The middle moon is barren and unremarkable but the nearest moon approaches the Roche Limit, which is slowly tearing it apart, giving it an egg-like shape.

In an odd happenstance, gravitational and tectonic forces have combined to produce a world whose oceans are all at high altitudes, located on broad plains whose great concave basins fill with liquid methane. The higher altitudes produce environments that allow methane to remain in its liquid state, an impossibility at lower altitudes, where the temperature is marginally higher. Vavkuk's lowlands are dry and barren. The atmosphere of the planet is a nitrogen-methane mix with trace amounts of other gases, unbreathable by humans and the other major species of Charted Space. Homeothermic sophont species must wear protective clothing and a breathing apparatus with air tanks but no vacc suit is required.

Because of the dense atmosphere, the locals who brave the outdoors often use artificial wings to fly. While gravitic technology exists at TL8, miniaturisation of gravitic components is beyond local manufacturing capabilities, precipitating the need for an alternative form of aerial transportation.

Item	TL	Effect	Kg	Cost
Artificial Wings	8	Flight (slow), 4 hours	10	Cr12000

DARK MESSENGER

This specialised ship is tasked with the delivery of mail to Vavkuk and possibly other Lesser Rift planets. The Travellers may use the *Dark Messenger* to send information to Vavkuk or for transportation if they have decided to re-embody there.

Approximately 80 percent of the hull is built on the same form factor as a standard express boat but unlike the x-boat, the ship is outfitted with thrusters to propel it from jump point to communications range so that it can transmit its mail array data. The ship is purpose-built for transportation across a five-parsec gap. It may optionally be crewed by a single astrogator/engineer but contains two staterooms for separate personnel. The pilot role is automated.

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	200 tons, Sphere	—	11
	Stealth (advanced)	—	200
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 4	5.76	2.88
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (concealed)	10	20
J-Drive	Jump 5	30	45
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 150	10	10
Fuel Tanks	J-5, 4 weeks of operation	101	—
Bridge	Small Bridge	6	0.5
Computer	Computer/25	—	10
Sensors	Military	2	4.1
Systems	Fuel Processors (100 tons/day)	5	0.25
	Mail Distribution Array (advanced)	20	10
Staterooms	Standard x2	8	1
	Low Berths x6	3	0.3
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Jump Control/5	—	0.5
	Library	—	—
	Anti-hijack/3	—	10
	Virtual Crew/1	—	5
	Intellect	—	—
Common Areas		2	0.2
Cargo		0.24	—

Crew

Astrogator, Engineer

Hull: 80

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr28232/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr338.7843

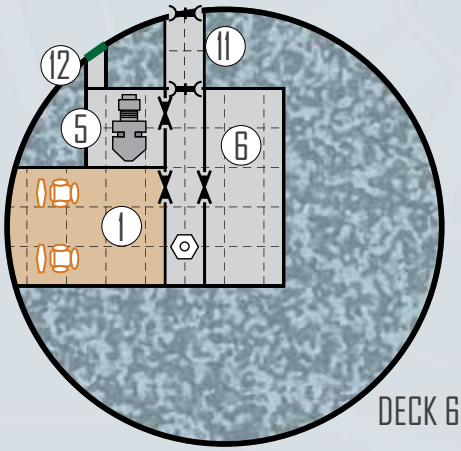
Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	40
Manoeuvre Drive	80
Jump Drive	100
Sensors	2
Fuel Processor	5

DARK MESSENGER

LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Sensors
6. Fuel processors
7. Mail distribution array
8. Low berths
9. Staterooms
10. Common areas
11. Airlock
12. Cargo



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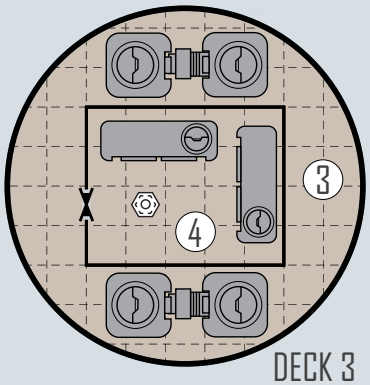

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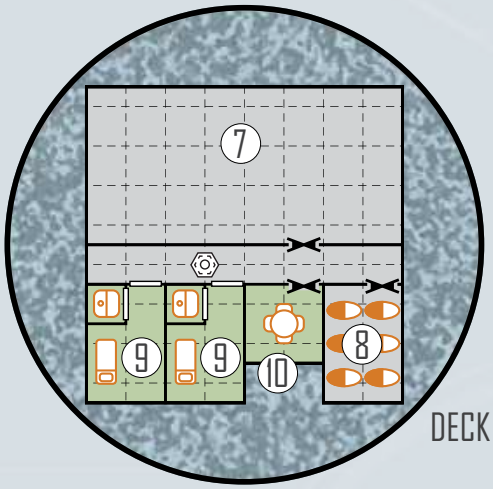

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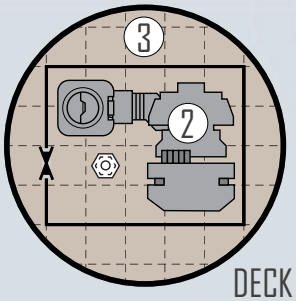

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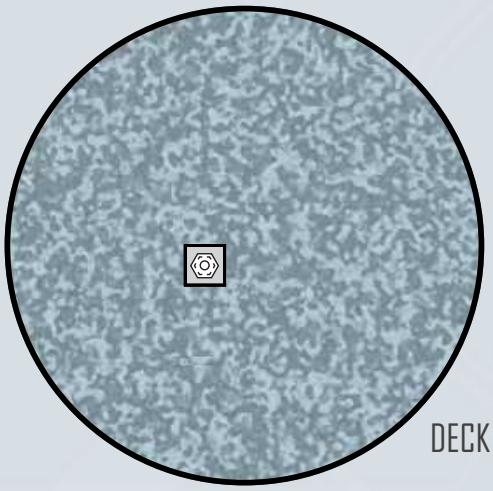

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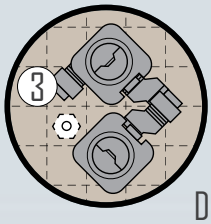


DECK 1

GLACYR

The island upon which Second Reference resides is on the dark side of the planet, where the temperatures drop to a chilly -250°C, 70–80 degrees colder than the bright side. Convection currents from the bright side keep things more temperate than they would otherwise be.

Second Reference is a sprawling complex that uses infrared landing lights to prevent its shuttles from being seen when they land at the spaceport. The single landing bay is the platform of a cargo elevator that recedes into the earth, closing its retractable roof like the mouth of a leviathan. A single radome may be seen on the outskirts of the bay, passively detecting the arrival of incoming ships and transmitting landing coordinates via tight-beam laser to avoid detection. Underneath the ground, the cavernous complex contains a labyrinth of arteries and pathways that extend from its central hub like the spokes of a wheel, terminating in storage facilities of various shapes and sizes. One of these extremities has exploded in spectacular fashion, leaving a gaping hole.

Something came alive on Glacyr and it has left its roost.

THE ANCIENT AUTOMATON

Upon arrival at Vavkuk, the Travellers may make their way towards Second Reference if they found all the clues to its location. This is where the Imperium stores some of the most dangerous artefacts it has discovered, items deemed too risky to keep within the boundaries of Imperial space. One of these is an Ancients war machine of the type found on Vland in the early pre-history of its human population. Many of these war machines fought on for centuries, long after the Final War of the Ancients was over (refer to *Secrets of the Ancients* for more information). Early Vilani civilisation cowered in fear before their might, lest they become victims of the wanton destruction wrought by the machines.

One such machine has escaped its bonds. The war machine by itself is inert. Its artificial alien mind went defunct long ago, making it little more than an aggrandised statue; however, it has acquired a new mind, one that desperately wants to liberate itself from the clutches of Second Reference. That mind is the advanced processing multiplier.

The advanced processing multiplier is housed in a mobile structure, a bio-remnant form similar to the egg-and-lattice configuration of Naalir. It has embedded itself in the Ancients war machine, which it is using to defend itself and lash out at anyone and anything that might impede it, hoping to find an escape route, some way that it can reunite with its core processor – Naalir. It was awakened by Trasilon agents who had come to secure the device.

PURPOSEFUL GRIMACE AND TERRIBLE SOUND

The automaton is an enormous creature, seemingly too large even for the gaping hole it made in the Second Reference storage structure. It has somehow grown to more than three times its original size. Convincing the belligerent beast that the Travellers come in peace at the behest of Naalir might take some creativity.

If they enter the base before tracking the automaton, they find things in great disarray. Several workers at the facility have been killed by exposure to Vavkuk's poisonous atmosphere. They lay dead on the warehouse floor. Three Trasilon agents are present, wearing pressure suits and small oxygen tanks that give them protection and short-term life support from the elements. The Travellers may enter the facility and ask what happened but the agents are not likely to cooperate with them unless they present themselves as members of the Antarean military, fellow agents, or some other deception that gains their confidence. In the chaos of the moment, they might be convinced that the Travellers' arrival was a timely rescue attempt or reinforcements to deal with the crisis.

Provided that they maintain the ruse that they are intelligence officers or someone else with a reason to be there, the Travellers can access the facility. In the chaos, with alarms blaring from the destruction, they can work their way into the structure and infiltrate the inventory system at a terminal. To break through the security, the Travellers must make a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (2D minutes, EDU), which may be aided by Intrusion software. By referencing the serial number assigned to the advanced processing multiplier on Reference, they can find its slip and container. When they get there, they might be disappointed to discover that the container has burst open, apparently from the inside, and the device is gone. They may access holovideo security files at the facility, which shows them that the device broke itself free, made its way to the Ancients automaton, lodged itself in the vehicle, apparently activating it. Alternatively, they can simply search room-to-room until they find what they are looking for. The burst-open container stands out like a sore thumb.

TRASILON AGENTS

		SKILLS
STR	8	AOC (agent) 3
DEX	10	
END	8	
EQUIPMENT		Laser Carbine (4D+3, Zero-G), Combat Environment Suit (+8)

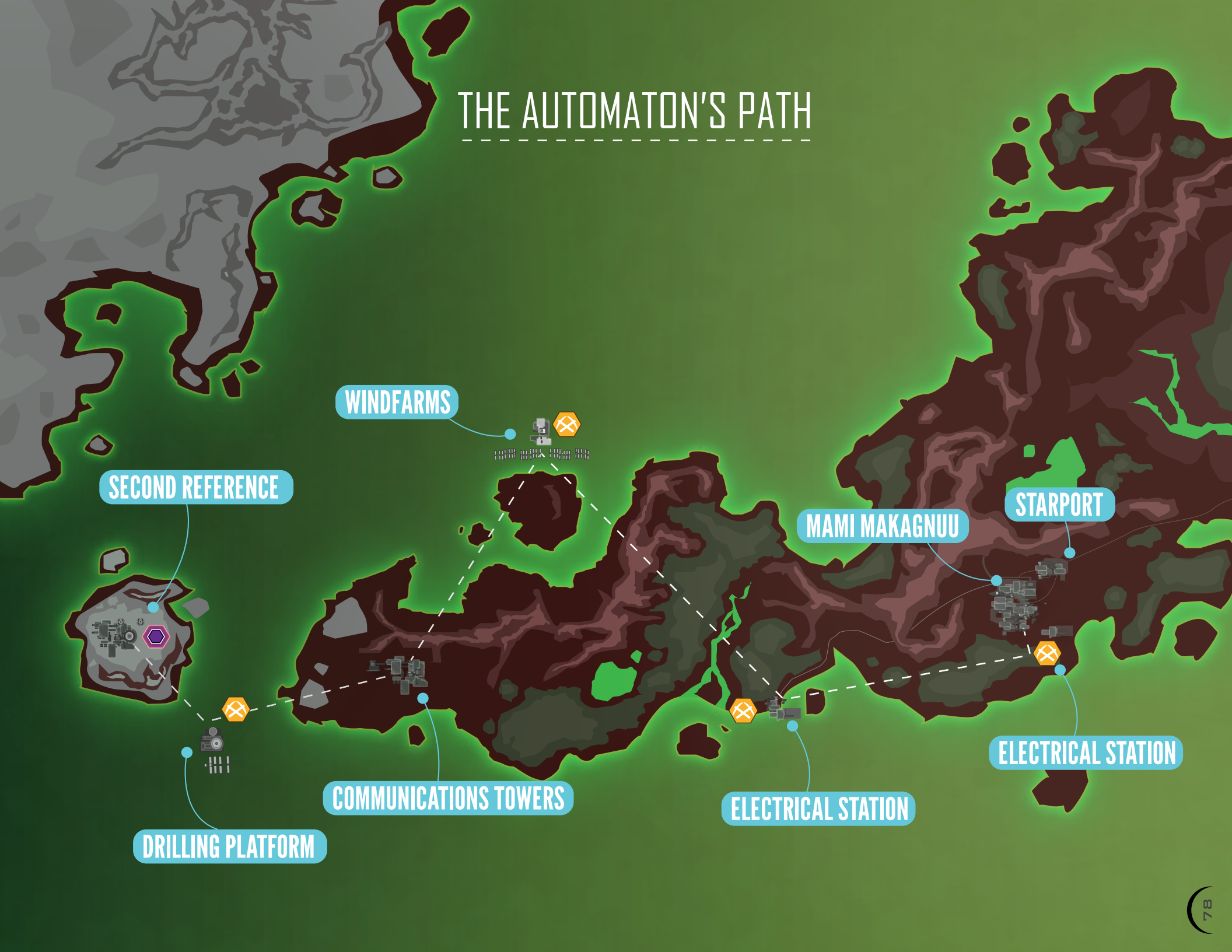
The automaton has 'unfolded' to achieve a height of 160 metres. The arcane technology that was used to create it enabled it to be stored within a relatively small chamber in the facility, perhaps only 4,000 cubic metres or so. After expanding and unfolding, it is over 20 times that size. It has two means of locomotion, walker and grav-assisted flight, but the latter it only does in spurts. In Vavkuk's methane oceans, it swims using its massive legs and vestigial arms. In addition, it sports a pair of wings that aid it in flight, providing a modicum of lift. Using its various modes of transportation, it averages 100k kilometres per hour.

It is wreaking havoc on anything in its path and will reach more heavily populated areas in time. It seems to be attracted to sources of energy and it makes its way to petroleum extraction platforms, windfarms, electrical stations and communications towers, all of which it travels to in zigzag fashion with the intention to destroy them as it passes through.

KAIJU HUNTING

The encounter with the automaton may occur in three phases: The first occurs when the Travellers find it, making its way through Vavkuk's shallow seas, heading westward like a shambling juggernaut. It is a large object but it gives off little in the way of an energy signature and very little light as well. Only its red glowing eyes stand out in the gloomy dark side of the planet. It does not use stealth technology but the fact that it does not give off emissions of any recognisable sort makes it hard to find. They will need vehicle or starship sensors to find it. Have them make a Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (sensors) check (1D hours, EDU) to track it down. If the Travellers figure out that it is following a chain of remote objects (the power stations, oil platforms and so on) then consider allowing them to make a task chain with an Average (8+) Navigation check (2D minutes, INT), and then

THE AUTOMATON'S PATH



reattempting the sensors check, adding the Effect of the Navigation check. They may reattempt the task chain as many times as necessary. If it takes too much time, they will eventually be able to discern the location of the automaton as it approaches populated areas in the twilight zone.

The second phase includes discovery and approach. Once they find it, they have to decide how close they want to get. It might be dangerous but to get what they have come for, they must take the risk. The Travellers might be afraid that the automaton will attack them upon approach when in fact, it barely notices them. Its vague objective is to find a way off planet, so it is making its way towards Vavkuk's downport to secure transportation for the advanced processing multiplier. Once it has done so, it will leave the bulky corpse of the war machine behind. Unless they attempt to impede it, the automaton does nothing against them. However, if the Travellers try to block its path or otherwise prevent it from moving, they come under attack.

None of the automaton's bristling weaponry seems to be functional at first, so it resorts to physical attacks; striking at them, biting them with its Droyne-like mouth, or throwing large objects at them (such as stones, pieces of destroyed structures and so forth). However, if it gets pushed, it could attempt to use some of its more dangerous weaponry.

The weapons it contains appear like spines on its hull. Its arsenal includes several antimatter guns and disintegrators, none of which have been fired for millennia. If the advanced processing multiplier decides to put them to use, the results could be catastrophic. For one, the alien technology might interact strangely with Vavkuk's methane-heavy atmosphere, creating pyrotechnic results. If the automaton's weapons are used in combat with the Travellers or the Vavkuk Atmospheric Defence Forces, roll 1D on the Ancients Weapon table to determine the results.

Once it is driven to fight, the automaton will not relent until all threats are eliminated, after which time it will resume its inexorable march towards civilisation. After one or more installations are destroyed during its trek, the Vavkuk Atmospheric Defence Forces send four *Miin Khirki* fighters to eliminate the threat. Initially, the automaton ignores them; their low-tech weapons cannot penetrate its molecular bonded armour. However, after a time, it seems to become annoyed and attempts to destroy the fighters.

Ancients Weapon

1D	Result
1	Nothing happens but sparking electrical currents run along the hull of the automaton.
2	One of the weapons explodes, disabling the automaton.
3	One of the weapons explodes, taking out a good portion of the automaton's frame with it.
4	If it registers a hit, the weapon partially disintegrates one target.
5	If it registers a hit, the weapon disintegrates one target.
6	If it registers a hit, the weapon disintegrates a cluster of 1D targets.

MIIN KHIRKI ATMOSPHERIC FIGHTER

Vavkuk does not have much in the way of military forces but they do have aerospace defences, including squadrons of fighter jets. The *Miin Khirki* is a multi-purpose model, designed for anti-infantry, anti-armour and aerial combat should the need arise to defend the planet from an incursion, as unlikely as that may be in the depths of the Lesser Rift.

TL	8
SKILL	Flyer (wing)
AGILITY	+2
SPEED (CRUISE)	Very Fast (Fast)
RANGE (CRUISE)	2,000 (3,000)
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	—
CARGO	—
HULL	6
SHIPPING	16 tons
COST	MCr2.392

EQUIPMENT

Actuation System, Autopilot (basic), Camouflage (Improved), Communications Systems (improved, encrypted, tightbeam), Computer/0, Control System (improved), Fire Extinguishers, Fusion Plant (advanced), Navigation System (Basic), Sensor Systems (improved), Stealth (basic), STOL

ARMOUR

FRONT	10	REAR	6	SIDES	8

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	0
Communications (range)	5,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-2
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-1

- Fixed Mounts (heavy machinegun, front) x2
- Fixed Mounts (anti-tank missile, left) x2
- Fixed Mounts (anti-air missile, right) x2

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Anti-Air Missile	8	8D	2	Smart	—
Anti-Tank Missile	6	8D	2	AP 30, Smart	+2
Heavy Machinegun	1	4D	1,100	Auto 3	+2

The third phase of the encounter is infiltration of the automaton in order to reach the advanced processing multiplier, and extraction of the device once they have 'convinced' it to come with them. The Travellers must devise a way to land upon and enter the automaton. The first part is not extraordinarily difficult *if* they are not overtly trying to harm it and if it is distracted.

Not harming the automaton is easy. It is practically impervious to weapons of TL15 and below. However, the advanced processing multiplier does not have the steely resolve that the Ancients device would have had were it under its own control. The multiplier is vulnerable to physical attacks and therefore perceives threats from anything that attacks the automaton chassis. If the Travellers approach without firing weapons at it, they may land on its surface. If they managed to acquire a few sets of artificial wings and they have the Flyer skill, they may aerobatically approach the automaton from a distance and infiltrate the chassis. There are numerous apertures for them to enter, as shown on the diagram below.

Ideally, the automaton will be distracted. If the Travellers can coordinate their infiltration attempt with the attack of the Vavkuki fighter squadron, they will have ample distractions to work with but there are other ways this can be accomplished.

After they reach the advanced processing multiplier, they must convince the consciously intelligent device that they do not pose a threat. They might even find a way to communicate that their objective is to pair it with its other component, Naalir itself. While the device does not have the conscious functions of Naalir, it may be reasoned with. The Travellers will have to be creative here. They can get through to it by displaying code from their consciousness files or from their travel packet, both of which have recognisable marks of Naalir's design. Alternatively, they can transmit data to the device that expresses their intentions in a language it can understand. If they have retained the transmission data obtained from the alien structures in Seas of the Ancients from Act 1, they can repurpose that data to speak with the device.

These are not the only solutions. The Travellers are dealing with a frightened alien intelligence but if they can find a way to get through to it, they can finally obtain the objective of this mission and bring it home to Naalir.

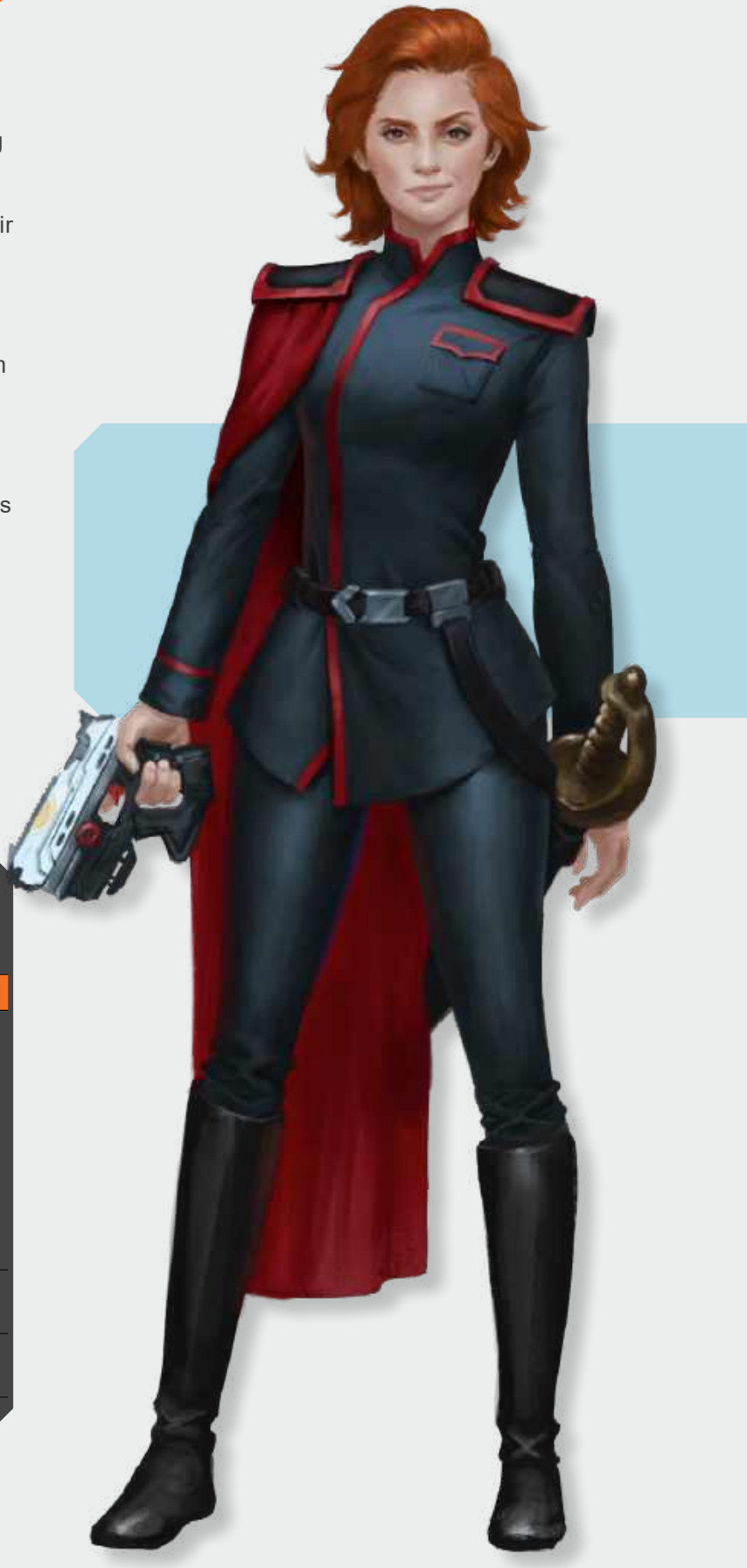
RETURN MISSION

The mission to Second Reference is one that requires a physical return. The advanced processing multiplier is one of the most powerful artefacts in Charted Space and the Travellers have found a way to acquire it. Getting it back to the Core so that Naalir can incorporate the device into its architecture is a mission unto itself.

The Travellers' consciousnesses temporarily inhabit androids or other vessels. Refer to Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information about the limitations of each vessel. It would be nigh impossible for them to personally transport the device back to the Core due to time and SAN limitations. However, using the raw consciousness files that were used (twice!) in attempts to complete this mission, they could potentially string together a series of transfers, each time inhabiting new vessels en route to the desired location in the Core. This might be an adventure unto itself but that narrative is not described here. An ambitious Referee may add it to their campaign but the narrative as written assumes that once the mission at Vavkuk is complete and transportation to the Core is secured, the advanced processing multiplier makes its journey successfully.

COMMANDER REDALOBON 'RED' HANNIHIGUAS

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	10	Astrogation 1, Athletics 0, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Gunner 0, Investigate 2, Language (Ovoghoun) 2, Leadership 2, Mechanic 0, Melee 2 (blade), Pilot (capital ships) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1, Tactics (naval) 1, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	9	EDU	9	
END	9	SOC	10	
WEAPONS				Gauss pistol (3D, AP3, Auto 2), Cutlass (3D)
ARMOUR				Shipboard Working Dress (+1), Naval Vacc Suit (+12)



ARGAEGH

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Vargr	Female	34

TRAITS				—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT		9	Deception 2, Drive 0, Flyer 0, Gun Combat 1 (slug), Investigate 2, Language 2 (Galanglic), Recon 0, Stealth 2, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	12	EDU		8	
END	6	SOC		8	
CHA	8				

WEAPONS	Body pistol (2D), Bite (1D+1)
ARMOUR	Cloth Trenchcoat (+6)
AUGMENTS	Subdermal Armour (+3)

SIR DAMIAN CALAFIORE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	42

TRAITS				—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT		9	Admin 2, Advocate 1, Diplomat 2, Electronics 2 (remote ops), Gun Combat (energy) 1, Investigate 0, Language (Vilani) 2, Persuade 2, Streetwise 1
DEX	11	EDU		11	
END	7	SOC		11	

WEAPONS	Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G)
ARMOUR	ProtecSuit (+4)
EQUIPMENT	Electronics Tool Kit

ENGINE OF THE ANCIENTS

Most of the Travellers' missions take them to faraway places but one is extremely far, practically beyond reach. Their consciousnesses must be sent to the far-flung Trojan Reach, home of a strange human variant known as the Florians. While ostensibly taken from human stock, the Florians are essentially an entirely new species created using the human genome as a template with several notable changes.

The dimorphic *homo sapiens floriansis* includes the Barnai who are small and physically weak but highly intelligent, and the Feskal who are large, strong, adaptable and dumb. They are so different in size and appearance that one might think they came from two different genera, yet they share well over 99% of the same DNA. Their distinct divergence was perhaps part of a plan by the Ancients to produce a human subspecies for a very specific use. Therein lies the mystery. Some believe they were designed to be the Ancients' 'lab assistants'. The brainy Barnai are a highly intelligent human subspecies, whose brains were enlarged and modified to process information better than those of their predecessors. The Feskals are their obedient aides, who perform each and every task assigned to them without question or doubt.

The Florians were intended to be an army, an unusual one, but an army nonetheless. The Ancients were very alien to Humaniti so one must not think anthropomorphically when pondering their motives. They had a distinct enemy to fight, one created by a species possessinga vocal talent called *poice* which enabled them to control the minds of hundreds of submissive alien species. For reasons unknown, Humaniti was immune to *poice* and thus made valuable soldiers. The human template was copied and re-engineered many times to create soldiers for their war against a seemingly implacable foe; hence, the plethora of variant humans scattered throughout Charted Space. Their immunity to these mind-control abilities might have been the reason they were originally extracted from their home on Terra 300,000 years ago.

The Ancients sent human operatives to do battle against the gas giant-bound species. For more about these aliens, see The Lost Civilisation of Guun on page 160.

During its interaction with the alien entities on Depot Prime during the Act 1 adventure, Seas of the Ancients, Naalir learned of a variant of human far removed from the original template, yet one that possessed many of their talents and a single-minded drive to complete the will of their Ancients benefactors. It believes that this is the Floriani. Naalir sends the Travellers to determine whether they are a threat and whether there is more to be learned about its own species through the lens' of Florian eyes.

THE MISSION

Naalir tells the Travellers...

As we proceed, we will make enemies. You must be aware of this. This path that we have chosen, this voyage we share, will put us at odds with many foes. There are vested interests that do not want things to change, no matter how doomed they are, no matter what the costs. But there are also enemies, perhaps nemeses is a better word, that we do not yet know about. The entities on Depot Prime gave me clues about where and who some of them might be. There is a world, very far from here, called Floria, inhabited by an unusual variant of Humaniti, one designed to oppose the change that my creators have inadvertently brought to you. We must investigate their world to determine whether they pose a threat, or whether we can change their minds and make allies of them.

It will be a long journey but we have the tools at our disposal to get there. We just need a little help.

HOW TO GET THERE

As noted, the Florian League is quite distant. Getting there, even using Naalir's consciousness transfer technique, is difficult. Time is important. The Travellers and Naalir are driving towards the completion of several goals, represented by the adventures in this second act of the campaign. Most missions are attainable in a relatively brief period of time. Two are external to the Core but are not so far that they cannot be accomplished quickly. Floria, however, poses a unique challenge.

SKIPPING THE STONE

Regardless of which method they choose to get to Pashus, Naalir informs the Travellers that the method of travel they will acquire there is something it calls 'the skipping stone'. Its studies of jump technology, which was unknown to the species that begot Naalir, have led it to discover a theoretical mode of travel in which jump drives may be intentionally forced to misjump. Normally this would create a random result, flinging the Travellers in a random direction and distance, anywhere from a single parsec to a dozen or more, or... simply destroying them when the jump drive overloads and explodes.

Naalir believes it can control the misjump phenomenon – to a degree – giving it the ability to carry them far across Charted Space at a much faster rate than normal. Its chances for success are limited only by their Engineer (jump drive) and Astrogation skills. As an added complication, to use this method, the Travellers must acquire a ship in the Deneb sector, preferably one with jump-3 or higher performance.

Naalir has a method to its madness. This mission has two objectives: To acquire advanced technology from the Jumpspace Institute and to determine the nature of the Florian humans. Both will be of great importance as the CI advances their agenda.

Should Naalir acquire the knowledge it needs, use the jump travel rules from the *Traveller Core Rulebook* as normal with the following modifications: When making the Astrogation check, apply DM-2 for every parsec above the jump rating of the ship used. Therefore, a ship with jump-3 can jump more than three parsecs using the skipping-stone method, but each parsec beyond the drive's capabilities incurs DM-2 on the check.

Their ability to do this depends upon whether they obtain certain data from the Imperial Jumpspace Institute on Pashus, which has the data needed to make the skipping stone method a surefire mode of travel, risky as it may be.

The Travellers can make their voyage to Pashus, the usual way – consciousness transfer via the Express Boat Network. However, they are going to have to weigh the risks and rewards. The data security is extremely good there. Refer to the Wonders and Perils of Consciousness Transfer on page 80 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for more information. The rules are different at TL16. Naalir's PA/R tech will be compromised on only an 8+.

They can risk it but their transferred consciousnesses have a greater chance of being spotted. It might be a better idea to direct them to another nearby world first and then travel to Pashus via other means.

Those are the risks. Now for the rewards. Pashus has TL16 robots and androids. Embodying there will give them access to vessels that are vastly superior to anything they have encountered.

Naalir presents the Travellers with two choices. Both require that they first travel to Pashus (Deneb 1432, A432455-G), which hosts the vaunted Jumpspace Institute. The institute has technology that would greatly reduce their travel time, but it will be difficult to obtain. Alternatively, they can extract theoretical information from the institute that Naalir can use to provide fast – if dangerous – transportation to Floria.

EXPRESS BOAT ROUTES

The ideal jumping off point to Pashus is the way station at Apge. From there, they can go to either Sinta (Corridor 2037, A201830-D) and then arrange for a faster, more direct Rift crossing, or they can go all the way around the Rift through the coreward reaches of Corridor, taking more time but with more certainty that they will complete their journey.

THE GREAT RIFT CROSSING

If they opt for the Great Rift crossing, they will have to earn the faster transit. The Express Boat Network does not have spacecraft that go all the way across the rift, so they will have to use other means for part of the voyage. The Imperial Navy runs jump-5 couriers across, departing from Sinta and terminating at Kamlar, which is a mere five parsecs from Pashus. Naval couriers are not permitted at Pashus for reasons described on page 90. However, they can abandon their embodiments and transfer their consciousnesses to an x-boat there – at increased risk of discovery since Kamlar is not a Way station, or they may continue in whichever embodiments they acquired while crossing the Rift. If they are successful, they will arrive within two weeks.

SPACE ODYSSEY

Before beginning their voyage from Apge, the Travellers and Naalir must make a few decisions if they plan to cross the Great Rift from Sinta to Kamlar. After their consciousness files travel for 12 weeks aboard various x-boats, they arrive at Sinta. They may remain in x-boats all the way to Tarin Sink, where they must become embodied to continue their trans-rift voyage. The navy's jump-5 couriers are not equipped with mail distribution arrays, which Naalir needs in order to carry the Travellers' stored consciousnesses.

There is an added complication: They are going to need the instance of Naalir that got them this far, so they must obtain a mobile storage device and download the instance into it. See Naalir's Travel Packets on page 13 for more information. Without Naalir, they could theoretically complete the mission but not having the instance present will limit their choices at Pashus. A suitable device will be a TL13+ Computer/1 or higher.

The Travellers can obtain viable embodiments on Sinta or any other world up to and including Tarin Sink. However, at TL13, Sinta offers the best chance to obtain a more advanced vessel. While it is possible to get lucky and find advanced robots on lower-tech worlds along the path, they risk getting stuck in an inferior robotic embodiment which limits their abilities.

The best option they have on Sinta is a collection of undeployed dock worker robots. These are essentially multifaceted stevedores and teamsters, programmed to do many things that might be required at a busy starport. Only three are available for embodiment, so depending on the size of the Traveller group, they might have to decide who gets embodied in these and who is relegated to a 'lesser' embodiment. The Referee may use the StaSM-class (called the 'spasm' by detractors) astromech robot, an appropriate design from the *Robot Handbook*, or they may create their own, limiting the design to TL12 or less.

Sinta's dock worker droids were ostensibly designed to fill subordinate roles but are overqualified for the job. Their broad array of skills and abilities make them far superior to biologicals, including advanced intelligence and enhanced physical abilities. They are costly, so have not been universally adopted but where present tend to take the jobs of their superiors rather than assist them.

Labour movements on less-developed worlds look upon this robot as the enemy and often attempt to destroy them in protest.

The path across the Great Rift starts at Sinta and continues with Kacxhun, Emephdee and ending on Tarin Sink, the last Imperial client state on the route. From there, the Travellers must connect with the navy's jump-5 courier service, who have an intermittent presence at Research Station Gamma.

Getting a lift on a jump-5 fleet courier poses less of a challenge than one might think. While the navy will not allow just anyone to come aboard their vaunted long-legged couriers – space is tight after all – the rules tend to be laxer in the Great Rift. If the Travellers can establish a reason why a collection of androids and robots should occupy the precious cargo space of the courier, they can obtain working passage or storage.

To convince the captain of a fleet courier that the embodied Travellers must be transported across the Great Rift: Difficult (10+) Admin or Deception check (INT).

Should they succeed, they manage to obtain passage (or consume cargo space) aboard the *Stark Contrast*, captained by Lt. Commander Evie Morant. The ship is a variant of the fleet courier presented in *High Guard*, that has a slightly larger fuel tank to enable the one seven-parsec crossing required as part of the voyage.

Robot	Locomotion	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
Sinta Dock Worker	Walker	22	7m	13	MCr1.9
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Athletics (endurance) 1, Drive (all) 2, Flyer (all) 2, Mechanic 2, Profession (labourer) 2, +2 Bandwidth Available				
Attacks	—				
Manipulators	4x (STR 12 DEX 8)				
Endurance	216 hours				
Traits	ATV, Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision				
Programming	Very Advanced (INT 10)				
Options	Android (enhanced), Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Drone Interface, PRIS Sensor, Transceiver (basic, 5km), Video Screen (advanced)				

FLEET COURIER (GREAT RIFT VARIANT)

The *Stark Contrast* is a modified naval fleet courier, designed to cross the Great Rift. The modifications were made to standard editions of the class, resulting in slightly clunky deck plan updates to accommodate the larger fuel compartment, most of which fills the space vacated by the smaller accommodations section. The ship retains its six-ton common area, which gives the crew space to stretch out for the long, multi-jump voyages across the rift.

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	400 tons, Streamlined, Radiation Shielding	—	34
M-Drive	Thrust 3 (energy efficient x3)	12	36
J-Drive	Jump 5 (decreased fuel)	55	90.75
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 300	15	30
Fuel Tanks	J-5, J-2, 4 weeks of operation	268	—
Bridge	Small Bridge	10	1
Computer	Computer/30	—	20
Sensors	Advanced	3	5.3
Weapons	Triple Turrets (beam lasers) x3	2	5
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x3	2	3.5
Ammunition	Sandcaster Canister Storage (40 canisters)	2	—
Systems	Fuel Processor (120 tons/day)	6	0.3
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
Staterooms	Standard x3	12	1.5
Software	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Evade/3	—	3
	Fire Control/4	—	8
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/5	—	0.5
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Virtual Gunner/1	—	5
Common Areas		6	0.6
Cargo		5	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineers x2

Hull: 20

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr21204/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr254.45

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	80
Manoeuvre Drive	30
Jump Drive	200
Sensors	6
Weapons	4
Fuel Processor	6

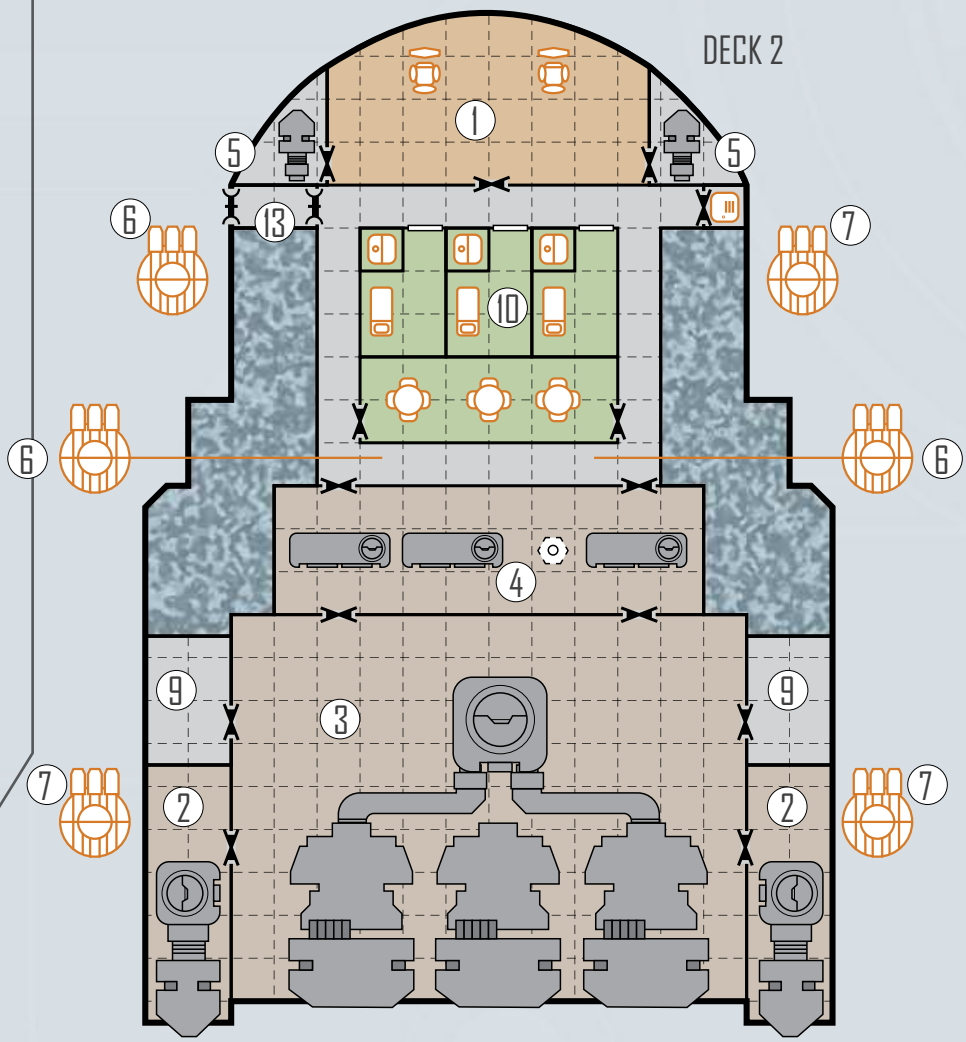
FLEET COURIER (GREAT RIFT VARIANT)

FLEET COURIER (GREAT RIFT VARIANT)

1 square = 0.5 Ton

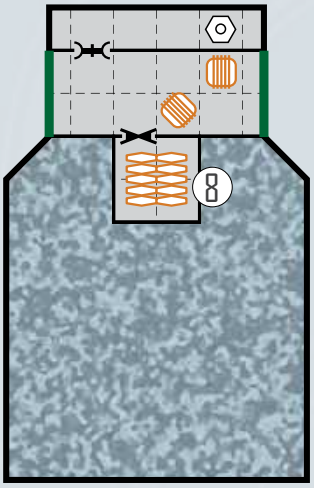
DECK 1 FUEL ONLY

DECK 2



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Sensors
6. Triple turrets (beam lasers)
7. Triple turrets (sandcasters)
8. Sandcaster canister storage
9. Fuel processor
10. Staterooms
11. Common areas
12. Cargo
13. Airlock



DECK 3

From there, it is simply a matter of getting across. Be sure to keep track of the Travellers' SAN characteristics as per Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. Each embodiment has a time limit, and the voyage across the Great Rift will require approximately 12 weeks.

The voyage from Tarin Sink proceeds to Nadnamnarni, the Boulderfield, a deep space stop in hex 0133, on to Asharam, Lorin Antune, Catacomb, finally emerging in Imperial space at the naval base on Kamlar. Each Great Rifting crossing is an odyssey, a herculean effort fraught with danger. The crew of the *Stark Contrast* treats each voyage as if it were just another day at the office but they risk life and limb every time they make a crossing. Each jump-5 requires a challenging check and misjumps are common without a highly skilled astrogator.

Once aboard, the Referee may run the crossing with as much or as little detail as desired. These are brief descriptions of notable systems along the route.

SINTA

(Corridor 2037, A201830-D)
This trade and transportation hub is a virtually lawless world featuring both naval and scout bases. Despite its lack of written laws, crime – or what would constitute crime on a typical world – is adjudicated by social customs with the usual penalties being expulsion from is otherwise a peaceful and friendly society. The penalties for committing more egregious crimes can be quite severe.

TARIN SINK

(Corridor 1432, DAE5301-6)
Imperial client state and site of Corridor's Research Station Gamma, which is the source for all sorts of spurious rumours. In fact, it is a storage site for unusual artefacts whose purpose has not yet been determined by its cadre of scientists.

BOULDERFIELD

(Corridor 0534, X000000-0)
Boulderfield, often referred to as 'the Boulder Field', is a large field of planetoids floating in deep space. The density of the field provides a gravity well that may be used for astrogation purposes but the countless tiny chunks of rock and ice, and larger planetoids make jumping from within the field (or deep into it) hazardous. Boulderfield is rich in rare elements, making it worthwhile for resource extraction despite its remote location. Dozens of mining platforms may be found within, frequented by supply ships and ore haulers, which jump to the Boulderfield's periphery and carefully navigate its hazards to keep operations running at these lonely outposts.

LORIN ANTUNE

(Deneb 2734, D525877-7)
Named for a freighter that wrecked there long ago, whose shipwrecked crew helped a struggling, balkanised society achieve greater peace. The world has long been rumoured to be a refuge of the disgraced Humbolt family of Vincennes but no proof has ever been found that they have a presence here.

ARRIVAL AT KAMLAR AND NEXT STEPS

Before they left the Core, Naalir instructed the Travellers to find a way to obtain a ship once they arrived in Deneb. Now is the time. They may borrow, purchase or steal a ship at Kamlar or one of the surrounding worlds. Naalir reminds them that the higher the jump capability, the easier it will be to apply the skipping stone method.

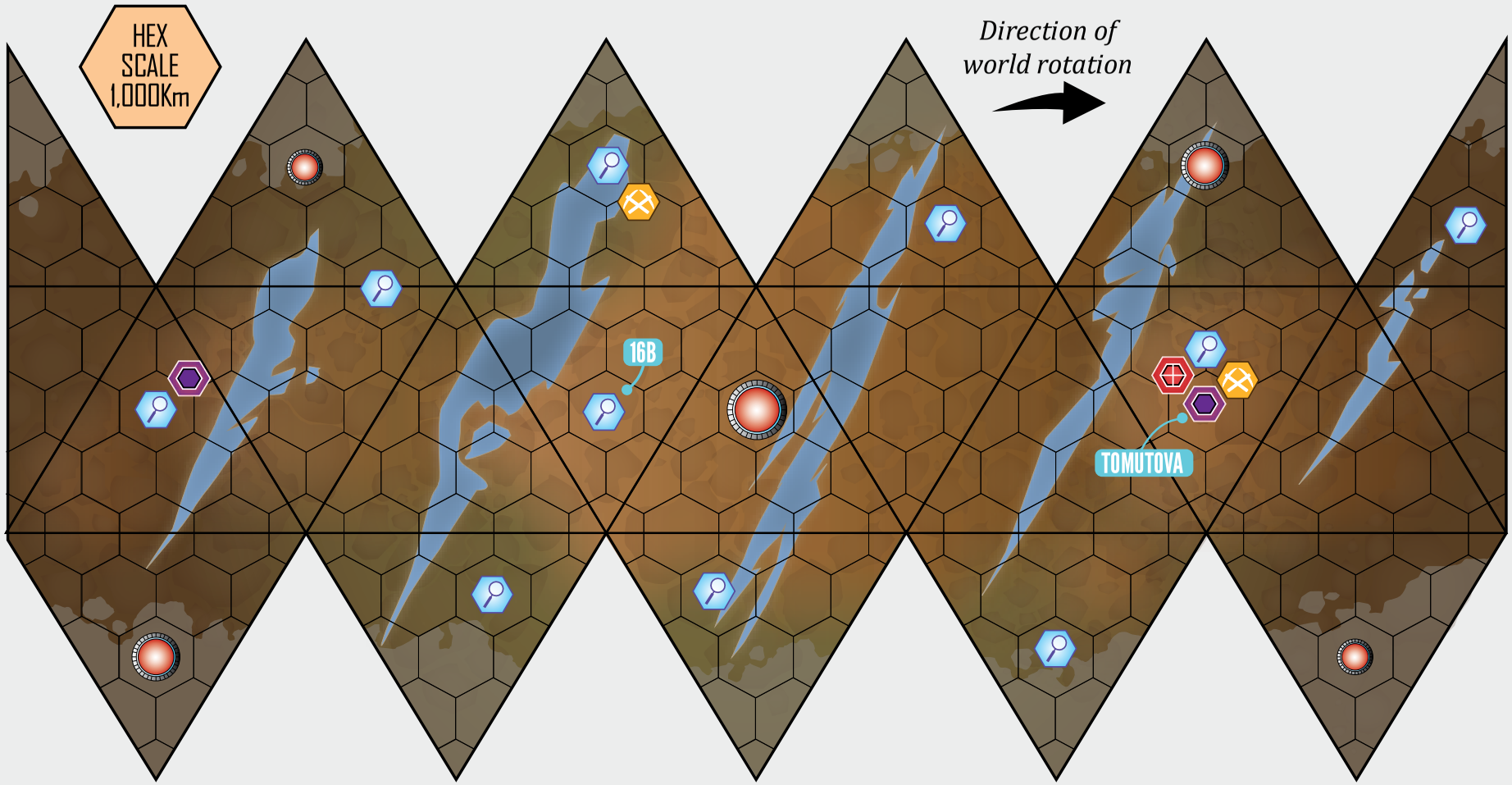
PASHUS AND THE JUMPSPACE INSTITUTE

Pashus is an unimpressive world, devoid of native life and possessing poor resources, but its mediocrity makes the system a fine testing ground for scientists working on jump technology. The surface of this barren world is peppered with laboratories, testing grounds and a collection of enormous artificial gravity well generators used to test the jump drive prototypes developed at the Jumpspace Institute.

In addition, the system contains 14 large gravity wells, including its host star, two gas giants and 11 worlds. It also has a dense planetoid belt with a large array of rocks used as microgravity wells. The worlds are widespread, making sublight interplanetary voyages difficult and the prospect of microjumping more appealing. It is close to the Great Rift where additional testing sites and long range jump platforms may be arranged without too many prying eyes nor is there high risk to the local populace. Simply put, if researchers accidentally create a multi-megaton explosion, it is less likely to cause anyone harm.

PASHUS

UWP: A432455-G



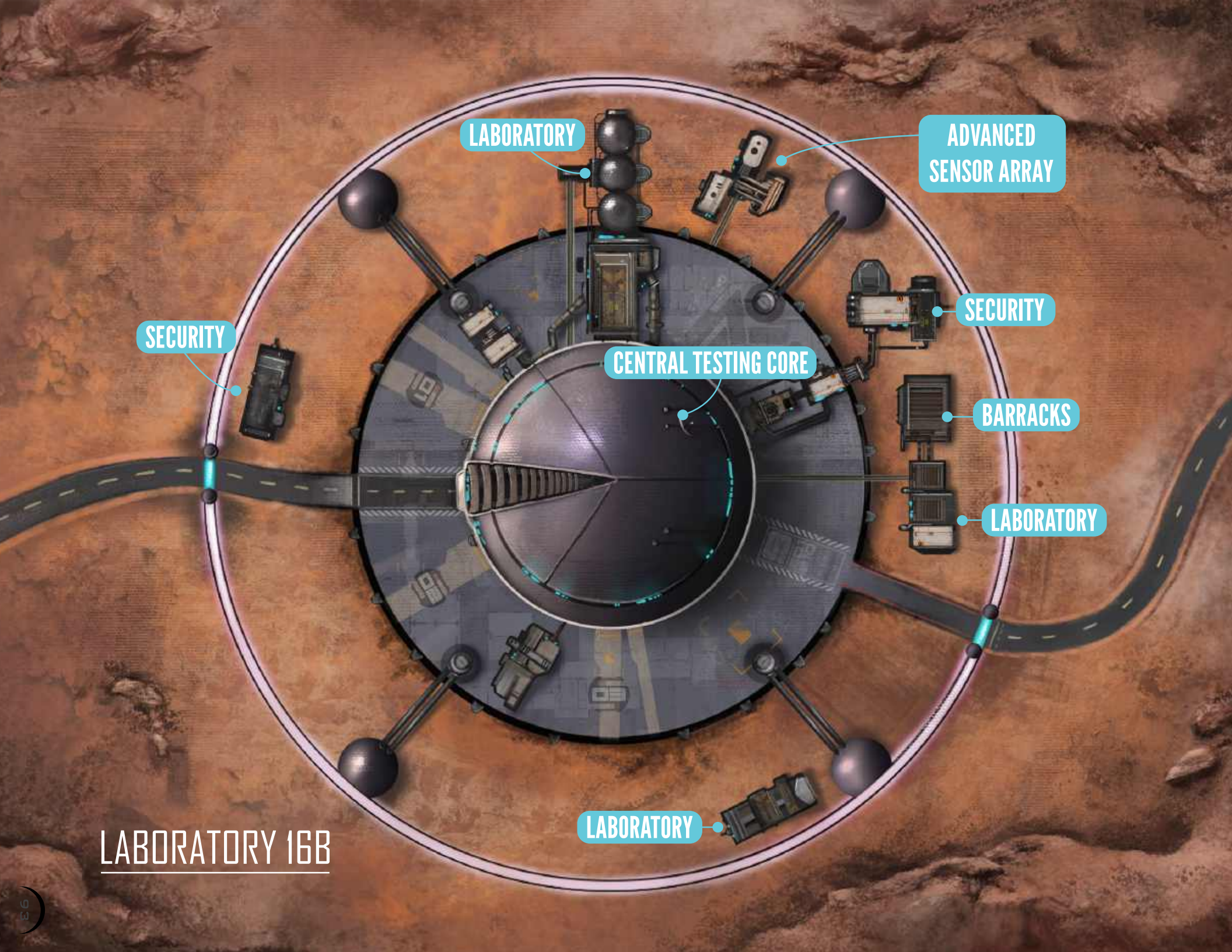
Settlements Starport Industry Laboratory Gravity Well

Note to the Referee: Share the planetary map with the Travellers; the gravity well generators might become an important part of the narrative. If they are curious about what these enormous devices can do, they can find out from scientists at the Institute. See Feint and Strike on page 102 for more information about this revolutionary technology.

The Jumpspace Institute was originally financed by the Duke of Deneb to research jump drives. Since its inception, the institute has become an arm of the Domain of Deneb government where its scientists regulate and set industry standards for jump drive technology. It is also the site of the prestigious Tumotova Academy where jump drive engineers and starship architects are trained. The Jumpspace Institute is on the cutting edge of jump technology and its scientists are always making new discoveries and improvements.

In the years since its inception, additional funding has come from endowments from megacorporations, led by Naasirka and GSbAG. The Imperial Research Directorate (IRD) declared it Research Station Zeta in 1089. The IRD is a recent arrival to the system but their presence has changed the culture of the Institute. Where before, it was strictly an asset of Deneb, the Directorate's presence has made it a possession of the entire Imperium, which is perhaps as it should be. The discoveries being made there will affect all of the empire, not just a single domain. Whether or not this is a positive is up to debate. It has increased the level of bureaucracy, weighing down research programmes with regulations and red tape.

Security at the institute is high but the Travellers have an asset; their travel packet includes an algorithm that can penetrate security software of Research Station Zeta, which is less impressive than that of the more mature one put in place by the Jumpspace Institute. Penetrating the layers of data security is achievable, especially for a technically apt team. It might come as a surprise that the 'Humint' factors in the institute's security apparatus – the *human* intelligence – are the more formidable of its security components. See The Jig is Up on page 105 for details.



LABORATORY 16B

Infiltrating the institute can be done in many ways, some more deceptive and others more forthright. The Travellers can come up with their own plan but keep in mind that this is one of the most important research stations in the Imperium. They who control the advancement of jump technology controls the future of Charted Space. The security of this facility is impressive but it has faults.

The IISS has a base on Pashus and the scouts are responsible for the security at the research station. While the scouts are not the vaunted Imperial Navy, their intelligence and security services should not be underestimated. In fact, when it comes to terrestrial intelligence – on-planet assets and agencies, 'down the gravity well' as they say – the scouts are second to none. They are a humble service despite their myriad accomplishments over the course of Imperial history. For this reason, they might not be as celebrated for the many things they do well but that serves them just fine. It just makes it easier for them to get their jobs done when their operatives are underestimated.

The IISS has a cordon of security around Pashus, with nearby bases in the Point Ay, Shiiku, Giranima and Atab systems, and a second layer extending to Imazura, Takahira, Djar, Keirei and Veldt. Each maintains the function of a typical Scout Service base, masking the presence of a vast, interstellar security apparatus that protects Research Station Zeta.

The Imperial Navy is excluded from participation and has no bases within four parsecs of Pashus. This is by design. The IRD and IISS did not want the presence of the competing and significantly more political navy associated with the programme, so they made sure to extricate them from the region. Of course, the navy still patrols these worlds, visiting even Pashus from time-to-time, but they have no docking rights at the highport or downport without a writ from Zeng's subsector duke. The navy has its own spacecraft research facility at Depot (Deneb 1613, A10066A-F), whose programmes are equally opaque to the IRD and IISS.

The Travellers may dock at the highport or downport but gaining access to the labs takes more effort. Simply arriving in the Pashus system and asking for access to the research station's data will not produce results. Much as they did when they sought access to Reference in the adventure, Second Reference, the Travellers must come up with a convincing fiction or a viable reason as to why they should be granted access to the planet.

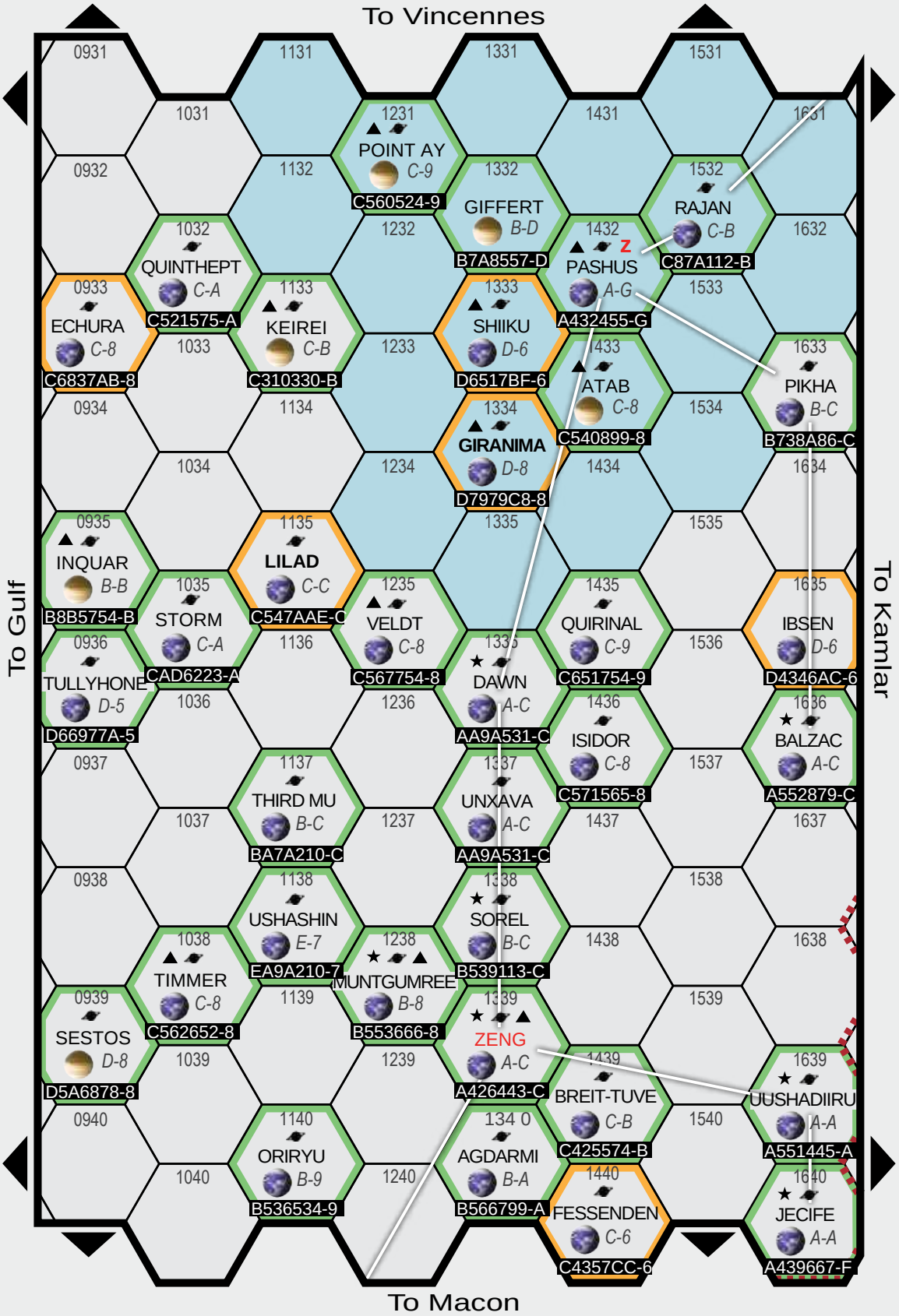
The Travellers can create a deception or – if they have the bravery to do it – they can simply admit who they are and make a case that they have valuable information to contribute to the programme. The fact that they were present for the event known as the Reverie could play to their advantage. Its aftermath was of great interest to scientists in the field of alternative energy sources and jump technology. The residual radiation from the event was reminiscent of the neutrino-laden residue left by a dreadnought after it has jumped outsystem... were that dreadnought five million tons with a one or two million-ton jump drive. If the Travellers present themselves as witnesses... survivors even... of that event, they can initiate a conversation about what happened, revealing as little or as much as they want. The mere fact that they were part of what the Research Station Zeta scientists consider an important unsolved mystery will give them the cachet to become insiders.

First, they need to establish a connection. Determine what they have to offer; if any of the Travellers are accomplished scientists or retired scouts, they can leverage that for a connection with an official at the base. They might also consider using the clout of their Imperial knight. The method they choose determines who they connect with.

MAKING FRIENDS

Making connections will be key to obtaining the data they want so they can finish their voyage to Floria. There are several potential candidates, depending on what they are looking for and what skills and methods the Travellers bring to the table. Both the highport and downport have large public areas where visiting dignitaries, academic engagements and trade missions are entertained by members of the research station bureaucracy, Scout Service officials and the scientific community. There are opportunities to intermingle with Pashus' power brokers.

Arya Beltwise, Research Directorate Assistant Chief Operational Officer – her title is a mouthful but her role is to basically do everything necessary to keep a high-tech research facility up and running. Research Station Zeta and the Jumpspace Institute were deliberately placed on a barren world in an obscure cluster of worlds. Regional powerhouses Pikha and Lilad are nearby but neither factors directly into Pashus' ongoing operations. Pashus' more relevant connections are with Vincennes, from which it obtains the high-tech components it needs to run its labs, and Deneb, which is the chief financier of the expensive operation.



Gas Giant
Security Cordons
Imperial Scout Base
Z Imperial Research Station
Secure System
Amber Zone
X-boat Route
Empire Border
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)
Imperial Naval Base

If the Travellers have significant financial assistance to offer or can prove that they represent wealthy interests who can provide an endowment, then Arya would like a meeting with them. Make a Difficult (10+) Admin or Persuade check (SOC) to make a convincing argument. If their claims or offer are false, make it a task chain, with a preliminary Difficult (10+) Deception check (INT), which will signify whether their cover story is convincing.

Macwin Balovert is a financier working for shady interests that help fund research on the planet. He will never tell who those interests are but anyone who knows a bit about the history of Deneb might be led to believe he works for the Humbolts, who allegedly work through various shell corporations and criminal organisations to retain their convoluted interests in the sector. Pashus certainly qualifies as one of the jewels of Deneb, so if the Humbolt conspiracies are true, men like Balovert must be in their employ.

If the Travellers initiate their exploration of Pashus by delving into its underworld to see if they can make a connection, allow them to make a Difficult (10+) Streetwise or Carouse check (SOC) to meet Balovert, who can give them what they want either for a large sum of Credits or valuable information.

All Imperial worlds have a noble assigned to manage them and Pashus is no different. **Dame Nacia Valle** is Pashus's knight. It might seem odd that such an important world only has a lowly knight assigned to it but perhaps the scientists, administrators and faculty of the Research Station and Jumpspace Institute *want* it that way. As Imperial worlds go, Pashus does not pay much in taxes and does not directly contribute to the flow of free trade. Its Class A starport is a deceptive indicator; Class A can indicate that the world is a trade hub but Pashus is not a commercial player. It receives the classification because its starport has a shipyard, used to build prototype ships and jump drive components for research and development purposes.

Dame Valle has one of the duller posts in the sector and is not always present. When she is there, she is not treated with much deference by the egalitarian technocrats who run the world. She can be bought off with fawning attention and favours that inflate her sense of self-worth. While she does not play much of a factor in the day-to-day operation of the research station or institute, she does have a remarkably high security clearance. Dame Valle is sort of a back door access point but an effective one nonetheless. An Average (8+) Carouse, Deception or Diplomat check (SOC) can serve as the key to that back door. It will be interesting to see what other doors she can open for them.

Many members of the scientific community have virtually unfettered access. While poring over the thousands of scientists working in the R&D field or the faculty, the Travellers stumble upon **Dr. Ryngal Tivet**. Fully half of Tivet's job is applying for grants to keep the institute's lesser-known – but equally important – projects and courses running efficiently. Should they meet him while touring the grounds or seeking access to the laboratories or study halls, the Travellers can ingratiate themselves with Tivet by showing that they know their stuff. Make a Difficult (10+) Engineer (jump drive) or suitable Science check (EDU) to curry favour with this busy member of the community.

An area of Jumpspace Institute responsibilities that people often overlook is its regulatory function. The institute is responsible for standards and compliance for the Imperium-wide jump drive industry. **Nakub Yllybor** is an attorney who manages relations with public and private interests involved in the design and manufacture of jump drives. He is always a bit overwrought from the stress of his job and can be appealed to by a sympathetic group of Travellers. Make an Average (8+) Advocate check (EDU) to identify an area that needs regulation and open it up to discussion with Mr. Yllybor. He might bore them to death with an hour-long rant about how difficult it is to balance the needs and wants of a massive industry but the Travellers will have lent a sympathetic ear and made a friend who can connect them with relevant departments of the institute.

ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

Once they have access to the institute via the contacts they have made, the Referee may assume the Travellers have a degree of access and they can find the location of the data Naalir needs by performing an Average (8+) Investigate check (1D days, INT).

A successful check enables the Travellers to find the encrypted data trove that Naalir needs to use the skipping stone method. However, it also reveals that the Institute is working on projects of far greater ability. Their search may eventually lead them to the mysterious project Zeta-014. Learning of its existence is one thing but finding out what it is all about will take more effort. They have found what they came for but if they want to learn what is *really* going on at Pashus, they are going to have to dig deeper.

If they choose to do so, they will have to take some chances, chances that could blow their cover and get them into serious trouble. Once they find the data trove, breaking into the encrypted files will take additional effort, as described in the following checks.

Hack the Jumpspace Institute computer network to obtain the data needed to perform the skipping stone method: Difficult (12+) Electronics (computers) check (2D hours, EDU). Success gets Naalir's travel packet what it needs. Failure means they do not but they may try again if they did not incur an Exceptional Failure, which trips an alarm and their signal is tracked. Here come the security forces!

Get the same information from the Research Station Zeta computer network: Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (2D hours, EDU). It turns out the research station's data security is weaker than the institute's. Again, success gets Naalir's algorithm what it needs. Failure means they do not. Exceptional Failure trips an alarm and their signal is tracked.

Dig deeper into the Jumpspace Institute network and uncover its top-secret programmes: Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (D3 days, INT). Marginal to Average Success enables them to discover the existence of the Zeta-014 programme (see following page). On Exceptional Success, they also learn about the Paradigm Shift (see page 107).

Forge a security clearance and create a suitable cover to get a tour: Very Difficult (12+) Deception check (SOC). Marginal Success gets the Travellers into the facility. Average Success gets them a tour of the Zeta-014 project. Exceptional Success gets them on the ship. A subsequent successful Stealth check gets them into areas with classified information.

If the Travellers think of it, they may change this into a task chain. First make a Difficult (10+) Admin check (2D hours, INT) to analyse and learn how best to exploit the security clearance system and then make the Deception check, finally adding the Admin check.

All of the above require illegal activities, intrusions of highly secure and confidential Imperial government data. However, it does not *have* to be this way. They do not have to steal any data or break into any secure facilities if they do not want to. There are other ways to get what they need simply by asking but it will require some creativity and preparation. Some possibilities include…

EUREKA!

Naalir is onto something special with its discovery of the 'skipping stone' method. This approach deliberately harnesses the characteristics of a misjump. If the scientists of the Jumpspace Institute were to examine Naalir's discovery, they could harvest the data for more information for Zeta-014, the hop drive programme. The scientists and engineers at the institute have long theorised that misjumps were simply errors that inadvertently extended the distance of a jump. In other words, misjumps might just be uncontrolled hops.

If the Travellers are willing, the Jumpspace Institute could benefit if they allowed the research team to install diagnostic software on their ship. They might even be willing to help by providing a backup jump drive in case the skipping stone method drops them in the wrong location, possibly even an empty hex, or it destroys the main drive altogether. With a backup drive, their astrogator could chart a new course and get the mission back on track.

They might also be willing to install a prototype hop governor, a device that calibrates hop distance. Normally, a governor simply dials down hop distance between 1–10 parsecs but if applied to a standard jump drive using the skipping stone method, it could theoretically be used to control the otherwise unreliable results, increasing the likelihood that the Travellers could reach their destination.

The Jumpspace Institute is dubious about sending any of their staff on the mission. They do not come right out and say it but clearly the Travellers are attempting to use dangerously experimental technology, and there is a high likelihood that a mishap – possibly a fatal one – could occur. However, they are willing to send a robot on the mission that could assist the Travellers while it collects data for the institute. If the Travellers dig harder for an actual living participant, they might be able to find someone crazy enough to come along. The institute has more than its share of mad scientists and there most certainly are a few who would be willing to risk life and limb to be among the first 'skipping stoners'.

Create a legitimate foundation with a genuine interest in helping the institute: Difficult (10+) Admin check (1D days, EDU). This will get the Travellers basic clearance but after that they need to either make a contribution or deceive people into thinking they intend to.

Visit the institute on a diplomatic mission from a world, corporation or other high-value organisation: Difficult (10+) Diplomat check (SOC). This might be paired in a task chain with a Deception check. As always, remember that the Travellers have an Imperial knight among them, which can enhance the ruse.

Gain entrance as a visiting professor (requires a Traveller who was a Scholar of Rank 3+): Difficult (10+) Science (SOC).

Once they have gained access using one of the legitimate methods, their next task is to ingratiate themselves with one of the personalities described in Making Friends on page 94. After that, it is simply a matter of building the friendship and then leveraging it to gain greater access. 'Hey, I'm not supposed to talk about this but we have some amazing prototype ships here with cutting-edge tech. I might be able to get you a personal tour!'

Let the Travellers drive the narrative. There are myriad ways to get in but obtaining what they want will require additional effort.

READY, WILLING AND ABLE

If the Travellers manage to gain Jumpspace Institute support for their skipping-stone voyage, they can garner the assistance of a consciously intelligent robot or a bold PhD candidate who wants to be part of the mission... or both!

JI-2NE

What JI-2NE lacks in personality, it makes up for in utility. The robot is essentially an astromech with an advanced degree in physics and engineering. It could be extremely useful should the Travellers use the skipping stone method to make their way to Floria. In addition, the Travellers might notice that the JI-2NE chassis, with its consciously intelligent robot brain, would make a fine host for one of the Travellers' consciousnesses. It was not intended for this and it would result in the erasure of the robot's own lacklustre personality but it can be done nonetheless.

JI-2NE was designed and built by Naasirka, whose robots are especially revered for their quality, durability and utility. However, unbeknownst to the Jumpspace Institute, the robot has secret surveillance devices installed within its chassis that allow the megacorporation to spy on the institute. Wherever JI-2NE is allowed to go, it is illegally collecting and transmitting secrets to its creators. If the Travellers investigate the robot's programming, they can find the hidden surveillance software on a successful Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (1D hours, INT). They automatically find it if one of the Travellers embodies themselves in the robot's brain.

Normally a robot designed for scientific and engineering purposes would be utilitarian in design. However, JI-2NE was introduced to the institute with great fanfare and media attention, and therefore features an anthropomorphic design.

Willa may be introduced to the adventure if the Travellers press for a live participant. Most of the scientists and engineers at the institute are fully engaged in their projects and would be unable to go with them, nor would most of these dedicated professionals willingly risk their lives on such a dubious venture. However, there are always grad students trying to make their name at the institute and doctoral candidate Synta qualifies.

Willa is a brilliant student with a great deal of potential but after several mishaps in the laboratory and a failure to get her work published in reputable scientific journals, she is willing to risk it all on a voyage with the Travellers. She will dedicatedly work with them on any problems that come up and she is not risk adverse, which could be a problem. She will want to push the system to its limits so she can obtain valuable data to take back to the institute. She wants to make her name on this project and believes that will only happen if she takes risks.

ZETA-014

The scientists at Research Station Zeta and the Jumpspace Institute have been busy. For decades, they have been researching ways to break the jump-6 barrier. They ended up doing a lot more than that; they discovered the hop drive.

WILLA SYNTA

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	28

TRAITS				—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	12		Flyer 0, Electronics 1 (computers), Engineer (j-drive) 2, Diplomat 0, Medic 1, Investigate 2, Science (physics) 2
DEX	6	EDU	13		
END	5	SOC	8		

WEAPONS	Vacc Suit (+6)
ARMOUR	Engineering Toolkit
AUGMENTS	Neural Jack

Robot	Locomotion	Hits	Speed	TL	Cost
JI-2NE	Walker	20	6m	16	MCr9
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Athletics (endurance) 3, Electronics (computers) 3, Engineer (j-drive) 3, Engineer (life support) 2, Engineer (m-drive) 2, Engineer (power) 2, Mechanic 2, Science (all) 2, +13 Bandwidth Available				
Attacks	—				
Manipulators	2x (STR 9 DEX 9), 2x (STR 5 DEX 9)				
Endurance	576 Hours				
Traits	Armour (+4), ATV, Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision				
Programming	Self-Aware, INT 13				
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Drone Interface, Encryption Module, Engineering Toolkit (advanced), Geiger Counter, Magnetic Grippers, PRIS Sensor, Self-Maintenance Enhancement (advanced), Starship, Tightbeam Communicator, Transceiver (basic, 5km), Vacuum Environment Protection, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link				

Tailored Vacc Suit: One of the advantages of working with a top-ranked research facility is that there are many auxiliary technologies under development. One such item is a tailored vacc suit that uses TL16 materials technology to make it light, comfortable and versatile. The Travellers are going to want one!

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad
Tailored Vacc Suit	+6	16	120

Armour Type	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Tailored Vacc Suit	4	Cr30000	None

Hop drives are similar in principle to jump drives but perform at an order of magnitude higher, enabling 'hops' in the tens of parsecs. Hop 1 travels 10 parsecs in a single one-week hop; hop 2 goes 20 parsecs, and so forth. Hop drives first appear at TL17 but the one installed in Zeta-014 is a prototype, one that pushes the outer limits of TL16 to produce something beyond the wildest imagination of a jump drive engineer.

QUIRKS

Hop-1 gives a starship the ability to travel across 10 parsecs during a single week in jumpspace, enabling Travellers to cross huge expanses of space in significantly less time than the most advanced jump drive. However, the hop drive is not quite ready for industrial production. There are problems. When one makes a hop, they can only travel exactly 10 parsecs. Hop technology requires the invention of something that jump drive architects are calling a hop governor, which would enable an engineer to dial down the hop distance to anywhere from a 'micro-hop' of less than one parsec to any number of parsecs up to 10. Without a hop governor, it is impossible to go anywhere with a degree of specificity.

If the Travellers have made allies in the programme, they find out that 'Zeta-014' is more than just a project name – it is a hop drive-equipped starship. The prototype hop drive in the Zeta-014 is not 100-percent reliable; the technology is new and while the scientists and engineers at the institute have gone through numerous prototype systems (Zeta-014 is the 14th), that does not mean that everything is in complete working order.

TAKING THE SHIP

If the Travellers have made it this far, they have what they need to attempt Naalir's skipping stone method but the possibility of flying a starship with a working hop drive might be more appealing to them. The Zeta-014 prototype has already been tested extensively. Test crews have taken it on multiple micro-hops (within the Pashus system) and on four actual 10-parsec hops (two round trips). It is a working prototype. If the Travellers could either convince the administration to let them serve as crew or if they could steal the ship, they would have greater assurance that they will make it to Floria.

Depending on the relationships they have built, they can get administration to let them participate in an in-system cruise but participating in a hop will require greater effort.

FEINT AND STRIKE

If the Travellers intend to steal the prototype, they will have to contend with a challenging security system. Prototypes and other confidential programs are protected by Offworld Solutions, a reputable mercenary company based out of Pikha which has a long-term contract with the IRD, IISS and the institute. See page 130 for the mercenaries, along with their weapons and armour.

Once they get this deep into the programme, the Travellers may discover additional secrets. If they reconnoitre the site as part of a plan to steal Zeta-014, they discover that there is an even more impressive prototype. If there is a weakness in the security system, it is that there is a great deal more fanfare – albeit secret fanfare, known only by insiders at the institute with high-level security clearances – around something called the Paradigm Shift Project. Poor, lonely Zeta-014 now receives far less attention. On occasion, mercenary forces are diverted to the *Paradigm Shift*, especially when there are tours of visiting dignitaries or academics. These events provide opportunities for the Travellers to strike but not until they 'feint' first.

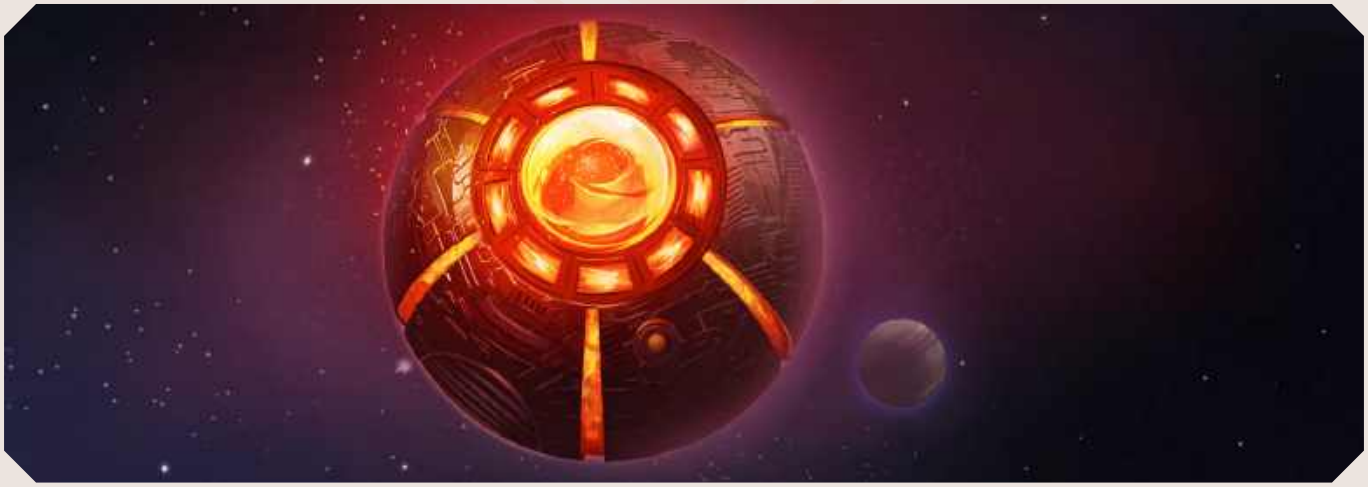
If they can draw attention to the *Paradigm Shift*, perhaps creating a perceived security threat, a nearly complete shift of mercenary forces to the newer, more advanced craft will occur, leaving Zeta-014 poorly protected, thereby providing the opportunity to get to the ship and take off from Pashus before anyone has a chance to stop them. Of course, they still must get to jump point but that could be easier than they think... if they learn to use the gravity well generators.

See the Pashus world map for the location of its many gravity-well generators. These enormous devices project simulated gravity to near-orbit, in some cases a distance of up to five planetary diameters. Normally jumping from such close distance to a gravity well would be suicide, causing the destruction of one's jump drive and possibly the ship itself, vaporising everyone inside. However, with the generators, all the Travellers have to do is get clear of Pashus' atmosphere, align themselves with an appropriate gravity well field and they can jump almost immediately.

The Travellers must do their homework ahead of time, however. Some of the generators project a simulated gravity well for a *larger* planet, not *smaller*. If they inadvertently select the wrong generator, they could end up requiring *more* than 100 diameters to reach jump point, not less. Once a ship enters the pathway of a gravity well generator (a 'tube' as the techs call it), it cannot exit without incurring significant damage, possibly destroying the ship. A good pilot/engineer team might be able to finagle it with a task chain but otherwise they could tear their ship apart. Better to pick the right generator to begin with or hack the system ahead of time so the gravity can be adjusted to their liking.

The generators are enormous power consumers, using optimised TL16 fusion reactors the likes of which are only found on Pashus and Vincennes (Deneb 1122, A899AA6-G).

Stealing the Zeta-014 prototype is difficult but it can be done. One must wonder whether it would be possible to take the *Paradigm Shift* instead.



THE PROTOTYPE

The Zeta-014 prototype is not a pretty ship. It is functional but not aesthetically appealing in any sense of the term. It has a small close structure hull with big bulbous components. Its hop drive is contained in a reinforced receptacle that seems to 'hang' from its ventral surface like an udder. Its other drive room components are kept deliberately separate in tank-like protuberances in the aft of the ship. Simply put, it is an awkward, clunky-looking contraption. Beauty is not the point; it is a prototype and it serves its purpose. It is small and cramped but it can get the Travellers where they want to go.

TL16		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	150 tons, Close Structure, Radiation Shielding	—	9.75
Armour	Molecular Bonded, Armour: 4	4.5	6.75
M-Drive	Thrust 2	3	6
H-Drive	Hop 1 (energy inefficient)	10	900
J-Drive	Jump 2	12.5	18.75
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 75	3.75	7.5
Fuel Tanks	H-1, J-2, 4 weeks of operation	33	—
Bridge		10	1
Computer	Core/40	—	45
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Bulkheads	Hop Drive	1	0.2
Systems	Fuel Processor (20 tons/day)	1	0.05
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Laboratory	8	2
	Workshop	6	0.9
Staterooms	Standard x6	24	3
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
	Hop Control/1	—	—
Common Areas		6	0.6
Cargo		20.25	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineer

Hull: 60

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr84667/month

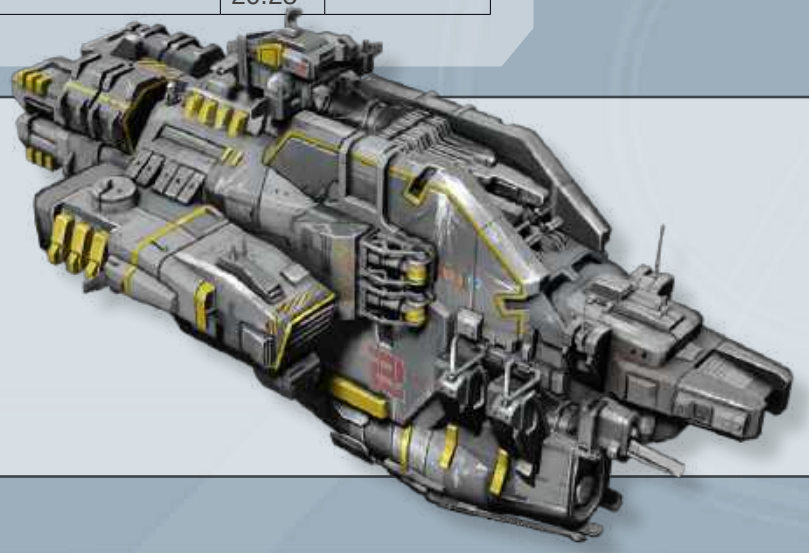
PURCHASE COST

MCr1016

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	30
Manoeuvre Drive	30
Hop Drive	30
Jump Drive	30
Sensors	8
Fuel Processor	1

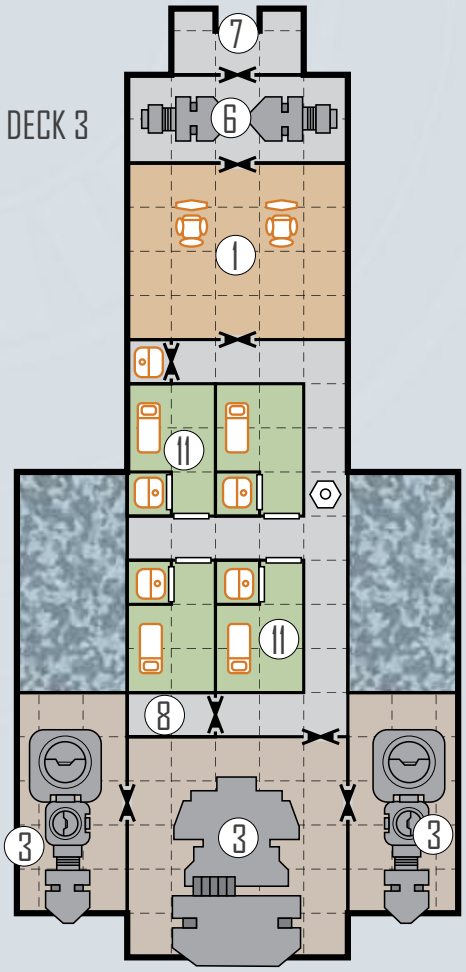
THE PROTOTYPE



THE PROTOTYPE

1 square = 0.5 Ton

DECK 3



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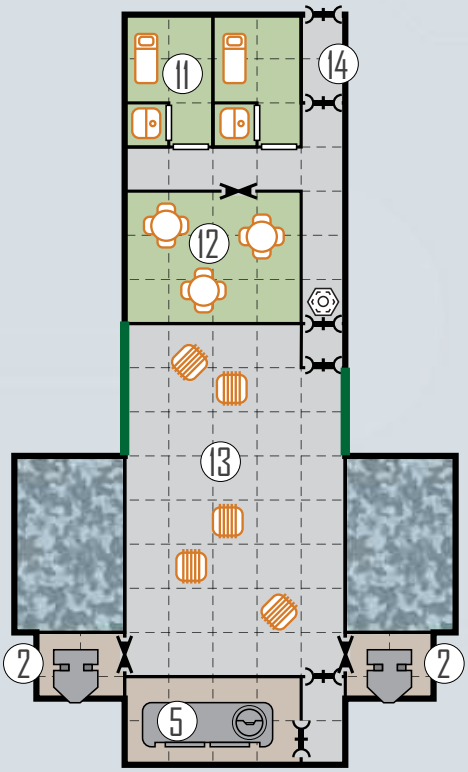
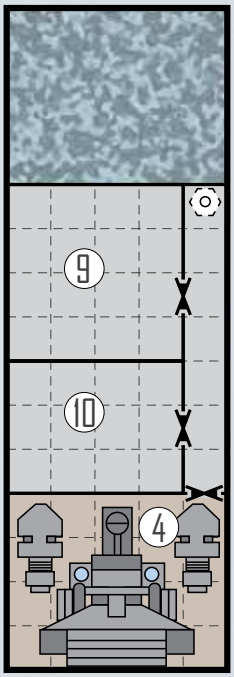


DECK 1



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. H-drive
5. Power plant
6. Sensors
7. Enhanced signal processing
8. Fuel processor
9. Laboratory
10. Workshop
11. Staterooms
12. Common areas
13. Cargo
14. Airlock

THE JIG IS UP

If the Travellers found a legitimate way into the programme, then they will either get the data they need for the skipping stone method or gain access to one of the two prototype hop drive ships. If they used Deception to forge identities, create a shell company or some other scam to get into the facility, they are likely to be found out at some point. IISS Humint watches each and every visitor closely and they will eventually expose whatever grift the Travellers are running.

After three days on Pashus, make one check per day to see if the Travellers are exposed by making an opposed Deception check versus the scouts' Investigate check. Give the scouts a skill level of 3. On day 4, give them an additional DM+1; on day 5, DM+2 and so on.

If the Travellers get busted, all is not lost. This is the Scout Service, not the Imperial Navy. The Travellers will be brought in for questioning by base police but will be given the chance to make their case. If they prove that they are not Zhodani spies or something, chances are they can get off with a light fine. They might even be able to ingratiate themselves with the investigatory arm of the scouts if they make the effort. After all, the Travellers are a well-connected bunch at this point.

If they can steer the conversation into a place where investigators believe their intentions are more about curiosity than espionage, they can likely get off scot-free and they might even be able to keep the data they acquired. This gives them the chance to talk about the skipping stone method, which might create the opportunity for the joint research effort that was described in Eureka on page 98. In addition, if they reveal that they were part of the event known as 'the Reverie', someone from the Exploration Branch is going to want to chat with them. This is yet another way they can make a useful connection. One such person might be Yary Jaxon, the 'disillusioned scout'.

OPPOSING FORCES

Scout Yary Jaxon is not wrong. There are numerous nefarious forces at work who do not want the hop drive programme to succeed. They either want personal control of it and the technology it will create, or they have vested interests that preclude their desire for advanced technology.

THE DISILLUSIONED SCOUT

Yary Jaxon has been in the Scout Service for a long time and despite his best efforts and a high-ranking role in the service, he cannot get the IRD to fund an exploration mission that is important to him. Jaxon wants to use one of the prototypes to cross the Great Rift, proving its utility for fast communication between the Domain of Deneb and the Core. Jaxon posits that were an enemy to attack the Domain – which has happened in four Frontier Wars – the hop drive could be the thing that saves the realm.

No matter what the Travellers are attempting to accomplish, whether it be the skipping stone or a flight on one of the prototypes, Jaxon can be the catalyst. He might be the scout who joins them on the first skipping stone flight, or he could be the person who helps get them a test flight on the Zeta-014 or the *Paradigm Shift*.

There are competing forces at work that prevent the Jumpspace Institute and Research Station Zeta from properly putting their research to the test. Jaxon is suspicious that their megacorporate sponsors are angling for a way to scuttle the programme. While he could be handy if the Travellers get in trouble with Scout Humint, he might even approach them if they do not. Jaxon is looking for a partner – a trustworthy outsider – who can break through the red tape that limits the hop drive programme. The Travellers might be just who he is looking for.

HUMBOLDT CONSPIRACY

The insidious Humboldts, ever present in the shadows of Deneb, might have their fingers in the pie... at least that is what Jaxon and every other scout with a top-level security clearance thinks. The bogey man that is the Humbolt Conspiracy is just that; a phantom threat that does not exist. That does not mean that the mere mention of it cannot stop the programme in its tracks, however.

NAASIRKA AND GSBAG

Nothing like the hop drive programme gets funded unless you involve the megacorporations. One is of the traditional Vilani variety (Naasirka) and the other the highly reputable creator of top-notch starships (GSbAG). Even as they make nice publicly, agents of the two megacorporations are constantly at war with one another over the acquisition of this very high technology. After all, the first one to crack the hop drive barrier controls the flow of transportation in Charted Space. Neither wants to let the other get the upper hand. The Travellers may see evidence of their presence on Pashus, both publicly and clandestinely.

Jaxon can tell the Travellers about both and how he sees them as impediments to the programme.

THE REAL DEAL

If the Travellers manage to ingratiate themselves with Jaxon, they might have the opportunity to travel in a significantly superior vessel. However, their mission becomes linked to that of the security and intelligence bureau of the Scout Service.

The ship they can travel on is the *Paradigm Shift*, built on the chassis of a Broadsword-class Exploration Cruiser (refer to page 18 of *Adventure Class Ships*), which features a functional hop drive complete with hop governor, enabling it to hop accurately in increments of 1–10 parsecs per hop, consuming a commensurate amount of fuel. For example, if they only hop four parsecs, the hop drive uses only 40 percent of the fuel for a hop-1. In addition, the hop governor reduces the difficulty of all astrogation DMs to one level per hop; therefore, any hop of 1–10 parsecs only incurs DM-1 on the astrogation check. Likewise, while the technology does not exist for a hop-2 (it will not until a TL18 version of the drive can be built), if there were a hop-2 drive, making a hop of 11–20 parsecs would only incur DM-2 on the astrogation check.

PARADIGM SHIFT

The Broadsword-class mercenary cruiser is a versatile starship that has been put to other uses. One such conversion is the exploration vessel. The starship architects of the Jumpspace Institute have taken that conversion yet another step, creating the *Paradigm Shift*, a long-haul exploration vessel with working hop-1 capability and a hop governor. This ship has none of the performance quirks of Zeta-014, making it a fully functional exploration vessel.

TL16		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	800 tons, Sphere, Reinforced, Radiation Shielding	—	86
	Stealth (advanced)	—	800
Armour	Molecular Bonded, Armour: 4	14.4	21.6
M-Drive	Thrust 3 (energy efficient x2)	24	60
H-Drive	Hop 1 (energy inefficient)	25	2250
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 400	20	40
Fuel Tanks	H-1 x2, 16 weeks of operation	168	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	20	5
Computer	Core/80fib	—	142.5
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Military Countermeasures Suite	20	40
	Long-range Sensor Suite (1 personnel)	10	14
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Weapons	Double Turrets (pulse lasers, accurate, high yield) x4	4	14
	Small Particle Beam Bay (Long Range, High Yield)	50	30
Bulkheads	Hop Drive	2.5	0.5
Craft	Docking Spaces (4 tons) x2	10	2.5
	Air/Rafts x2	—	0.5
	Docking Spaces (50 tons) x2	110	27.5
	Modular Cutters x2	—	23.86
	Docking Spaces (30 tons) x2	66	16.5
	Cutter Modules x2	—	—
Systems	Probe Drones (advanced) x10	2	1.6
	Mail Distribution Array (Advanced)	20	10
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Fuel Processors (160 tons/day)	8	0.4
	Briefing Room	4	0.5
	Laboratories x2	8	2
	Library	4	4
	Medical Bay	4	2
	Multi-Environment Space (10 tons)	10.5	0.25
	Repair Drones	8	1.6
	Self-destruct Lattice (enhanced)	8	3.2
	Workshop	6	0.9

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineer x2, Gunners x2, Cutter Pilot x2, Medic

Hull: 352

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr307679/month

PURCHASE COST

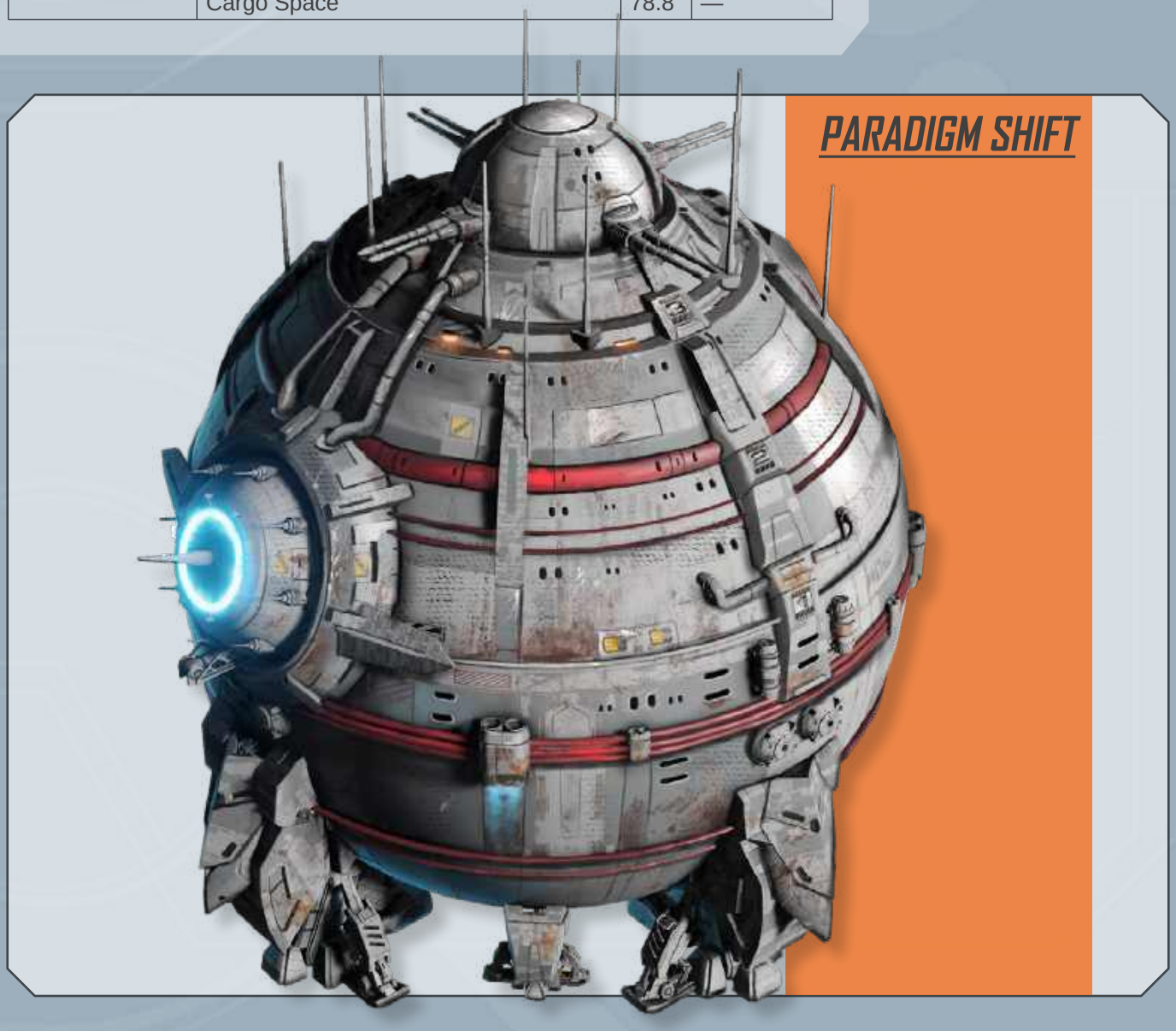
MCr3692.15

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	160
Manoeuvre Drive	120
Hop Drive	104
Sensors	13
Weapons	66
Fuel Processor	8
Medical Bay	1
Multi-environment space	1

PARADIGM SHIFT

TL16		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Staterooms	Standard x15	60	7.5
Software	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Auto-Repair/2	—	10
	Conscious Intelligence/1	—	25
	Evade/3	—	3
	Fire Control/3	—	6
	Hop Control/1	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Virtual Gunner/2	—	10
Common Areas		24	2.4
Cargo	Cargo Crane	3	3
	Fuel Bladder (80 tons)	0.8	0.04
	Cargo Space	78.8	—



SELF-DESTRUCT LATTICE

When it is absolutely imperative that a ship or assets within its hull do not fall into the hands of the enemy, a self-destruction lattice may be built into the ship. This feature is linked to the ship's power plant, which sends a pulse (twice the ship's Power score) through the lattice, releasing super-heated plasma throughout its bulkheads and interior walls, destroying everything within. It also overloads the ship's reactor and ignites any liquid-hydrogen fuel present for good measure. Ships carrying nuclear weapons may optionally link them to the device for added effect.

A self-destruct lattice usually requires several failsafes to prevent it from being erroneously activated but once its sequence begins, the ship can be completely obliterated within a single combat round (six minutes) or set to detonate within a specified period of time to allow its passengers to escape in small craft, escape pods or whatever other conveyances are present

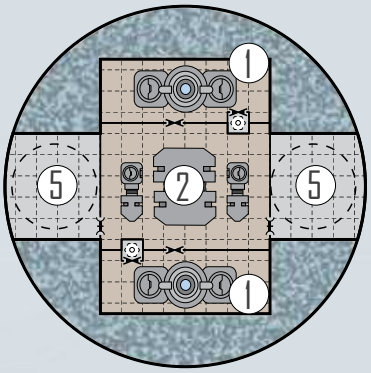
Option	TL	Tons	Cost
Self-destruct Lattice, Basic	12	5% total ship tonnage	MCr0.1 per ton
Self-destruct Lattice, Improved	14	3% total ship tonnage	MCr0.2 per ton
Self-destruct Lattice, Enhanced	16	1% total ship tonnage	MCr0.4 per ton

PARADIGM SHIFT

LEGEND

1. H-drive
2. M-drive
3. Power plant
4. Cargo
5. Modular cutters
6. Military countermeasures suite
7. Mail distribution array
8. Laboratories
9. Medical bay
10. Library
11. Long-range sensor suite
12. Air/rafts
13. Workshop
14. Enhanced signal processing
15. Cutter modules
16. Probe drones
17. Cargo crane
18. Fuel bladder

DECK 1



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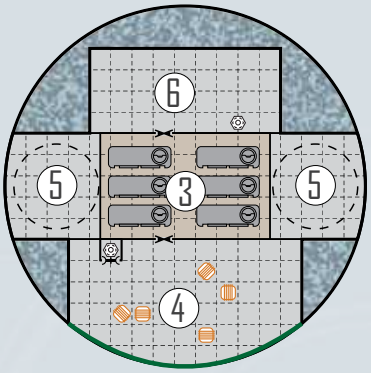

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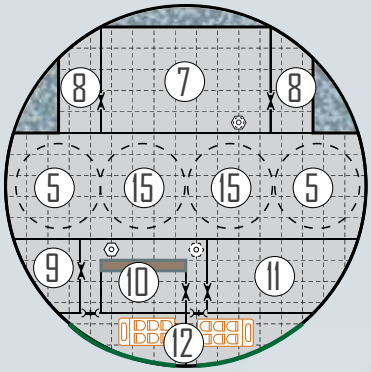

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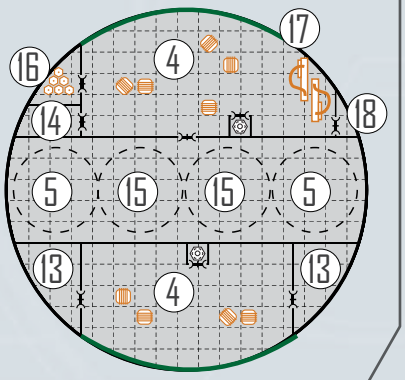

PARADIGM SHIFT

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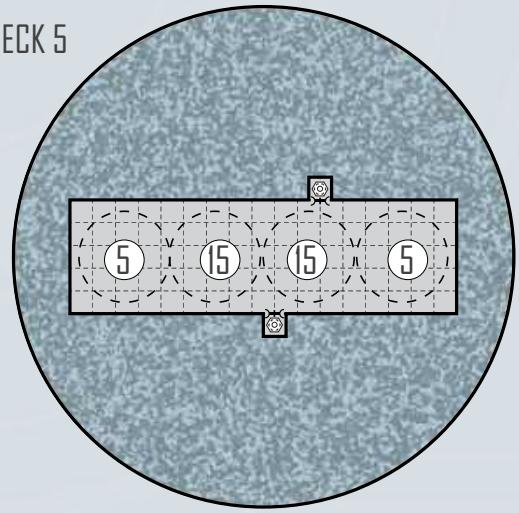

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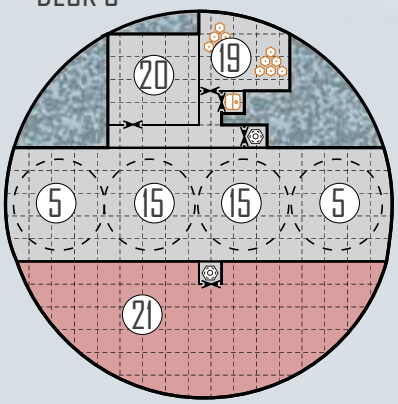

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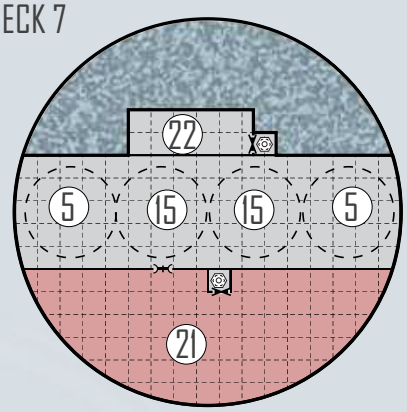

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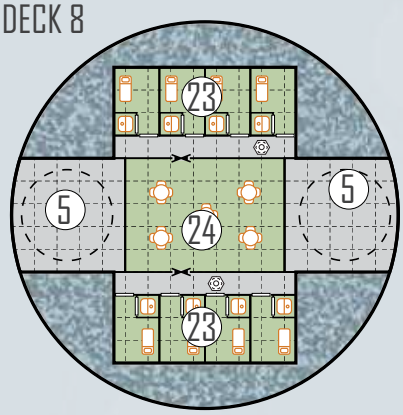

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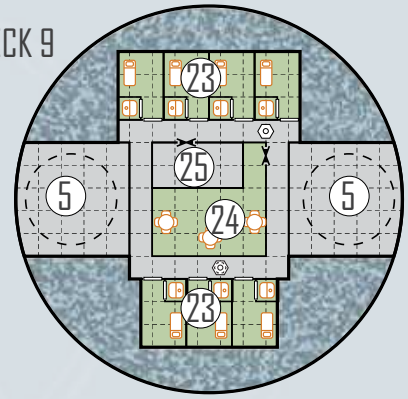

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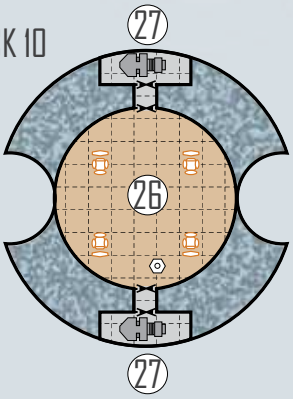


19. Repair drones
20. Fuel processors
21. Small particle beam bay
22. Multi-environment space
23. Staterooms
24. Common areas
25. Briefing room
26. Bridge
27. Advanced sensors

PROMETHEAN FIRE

The discovery of the hop drive will change everything.

For over 10,000 years, the growth of interstellar civilisation in Charted Space has been entirely predicated on the development and growth of jump technology. The first to discover it were the Vilani and they carefully guarded and cultivated it for centuries. The narrative that has been propagated is that each of the so-called 'Major Races' independently discovered jump technology over an extensive period of time. It was later discovered that the Aslan did not come by it independently but had it gifted to them by the chance discovery of a crashed Solomani starship on their homeworld. However, the broken narrative lived on, with each of the other species – Humaniti, Vargr, K'kree and Hiver – tenuously holding onto the myth of independent development.

The scientists at the Jumpspace Institute believe otherwise and would like to debunk that myth. They theorise that only one known species independently discovered jump technology and that was the Ancients. All others were the beneficiaries of the inadvertent trail of breadcrumbs that the Ancients left behind. First Humaniti (specifically, the Vilani) in -9235, the Hivers in -4698, the K'kree in -4142 and the Vargr in -3810. The Solomani made their discovery in -2431 and the Aslan developed their first jump-capable ship in -1999.

The evidence is mostly circumstantial. There are unverified studies of other species, elsewhere in the galaxy, who have developed widespread interstellar empires, none of whom have jump technology. The data from these far-flung empires is shoddy, not solid enough ground upon which to base a theory. Even so, these stories bolster beliefs that jump technology is an anomaly, one that has only been found in Charted Space.

The Vilani limited themselves to jump-1 and -2 technology for millennia, carefully preventing the technology from falling into the hands of other civilisations and limiting advancement. The tools were there to take the next step but the Vilani chose not to. Limiting their empire to only two-parsec jumps made it easier to maintain. However, as the empire grew, it became impossible to manage, the rot set in and the rest was history. For more information, refer to *The Third Imperium*, which tells the whole story in greater detail.

Leaping forward to the present day, the Imperium is in what might be described as its belle epoch. Trade flourishes, there are no major interstellar wars between the massive empires of Charted Space, and civilisation, society and technology are proceeding apace. The trade mains, communication lanes and the pace of commerce and communication between the stars has been consistent for centuries. The advent of a technology that expands interstellar reach so significantly would be a shock to the system. When something comes along that threatens to change everything, it must contend with all the interests that want to maintain the status quo.

No longer will one think of visiting a chain of worlds, a trade main or cluster, when hop technology enables a starship to leap over all the unwanted star systems to visit only the most desirable among them. The social and economic implications are huge and neither the Imperium, nor the rest of Charted Space are ready.

GATEWAY TO THE FLORIAN LEAGUE

Whether the Travellers make their way to Floria via the skipping stone method or one of the prototypes, they are crossing broad swathes of space in leaps and bounds. Travelling by hop drive (or simulated hop drive in the case of the skipping stone) is different. The pace changes when you cross such large gaps. When one is making jumps of two or three parsecs, one sees the relationship between neighbouring worlds. The Imperium is an enormous free trade zone and most of its worlds are interconnected by commerce and cultural exchange. However, when one crosses 10 parsecs between worlds, the relationships are more tenuous, even non-existent. As avid spacers, the Travellers will notice the difference.

They have two choices when they come to Floria: They can either go directly to the Florian capital or they may first stop at Yggdrasil, widely considered to be the Imperial gateway to Florian space.

If they go directly to Floria, they will arrive unexpectedly, which could have consequences. The Florians like to know who is coming to their homeworld beforehand. They monitor the common ingress points carefully to track and register incoming starships. Unregistered ships often receive a nasty welcome from a fast interceptor, the Florian version of a system defence boat. Unlike a typical SDB, fast interceptors have been known to go directly into combat without hesitating to ask questions.

YGGDRASIL

Named for the Ash tree of Norse mythology that was the source of life, Yggdrasil was a world of great importance during the era of the Sindalian Empire, some 2,500 years ago, but now it has only fleeting value. It serves as a stopover on the Florian trade route that extends from the Imperial border but many skip over it to reach Forandin, within the borders of the Florian League.

Its signature feature is an ancient space elevator, a celestial palace counterweight on the end of a 6,000-kilometre cord of carbon nanotube and glassteel. A highport in geosynchronous orbit hovers within visual range, a single diameter from the desert world below. The Travellers may choose to dock there while they get their bearings before entering the Florian League.

It is here in Yggdrasil where they can learn more about Florian culture and the necessity of announcing your intention to visit the Florian capital before jumping in unexpectedly.

If the Travellers SAN characteristics are running out on their current embodiments, this might also be a place to obtain new ones. While Yggdrasil does not have a high enough Tech Level to support the types of vessels they might need, nearby Dpres has an Imperial naval base which might have advanced robots or androids available. High-tech goods make their way all the way from TL15 Tobia, so a resourceful group of Travellers might be able to find what they want.

FLORIAN FAST INTERCEPTOR

Like most Florian ships, the design is a bit baffling and the aesthetic brutalist and blocky. Barnai are in the positions of pilot and engineer with Feskals in the roles of gunners and marines. Despite its small size, the interceptor requires two Barnai officers who combine with the pilot and engineer to command the Feskals. Standard operating procedure for a Florian interceptor is to blast away at an opposing ship until it is completely defenceless, scan it for life and if any is present, contact the opposing ship's captain to inform them of the Florians' intentions to board... if there is anything left *to* board. The breaching tube and forced linkage apparatus are only used when the opposition gives them enough fight that they feel the necessity to resort to extreme measures.

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	400 tons, Close Structure	—	16
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 8	38.4	19.2
M-Drive	Thrust 7	35	42
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 450	30	30
Fuel Tanks	8 weeks of operation	6	—
Bridge		20	2
Computer	Computer/5	—	0.03
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
	Countermeasures Suite	2	4
	Life Scanner	1	2
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Weapons	Small Particle Beam Bay	50	20
	Missile Barbette	5	4
	Triple Turrets (pulse lasers) x2	2	8
Ammunition	Missile Storage (144 missiles)	12	—
Bulkheads	Bridge	2	0.4
	Manoeuvre Drive	2.8	0.56
	Power Plant	3	0.6
Systems	Armouries x4	4	1
	Fuel Scoops	—	1
	Breaching Tube	3	3
	Forced Linkage Apparatus (enhanced)	2	0.1
	Heavy Grappling Arm	6	3
Staterooms	Standard x4	16	2
	High x3	18	2.4
	Barracks	12	0.6
Software	Battle Network/1	—	5
	Fire Control/4	—	8
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
Common Areas		8.5	0.85
Cargo		115	—

Crew

Pilot, Engineer, Gunners x4, Officers x2, Marines x12

Hull: 160

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr15682/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr188.18

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
80

Manoeuvre Drive
280

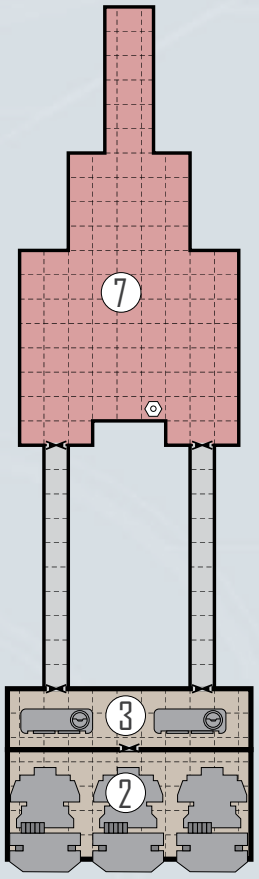
Sensors
8

Weapons
56

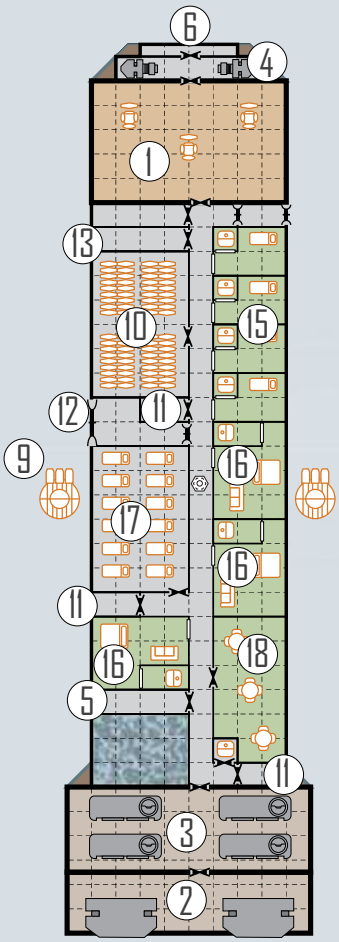
FLORIAN FAST INTERCEPTOR

LEGEND

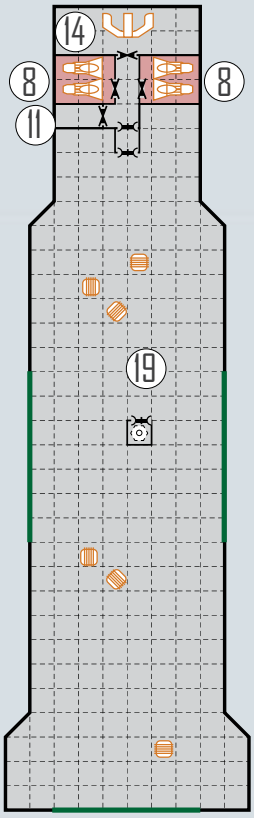
1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. Power plant
4. Sensors improved
5. Countermeasures suite
6. Life scanner
7. Small particle beam bay
8. Missile barbette
9. Triple turrets
10. Missile storage
11. Armouries
12. Breaching tube
13. Forced linkage apparatus
14. Heavy grappling arm
15. Standard staterooms
16. High staterooms
17. Barracks
18. Common areas
19. Cargo



DECK 3



DECK 2



DECK 1

1 square = 0.5 Ton

FLORIA

If the Travellers come to Floria without going to Yggdrasil or another border world (any world within two parsecs of the Florian League border), they will receive a rather unpleasant welcome. If the Travellers visit Dpres first and inquire about visiting the Florian League, they are informed that they must file a flight plan with the Florian Embassy first and allow ample time for a courier to travel to Floria to notify them of the impending arrival of the ship. The Travellers need not wait for a response; if they give the courier a few days, it should reach its destination long before they are able to get there.

If the Travellers do not file a flight plan with Florian authorities, after making jump or hop exit at Floria they are signalled by a fast interceptor, essentially a high-speed system defence boat with breaching tubes, forced linkage apparatuses and enough weaponry to punch far above their weight class. They may think to establish communications quickly to ensure no misunderstandings occur but the Florians are having none of it. They send one-way transmissions to the Travellers' ship declaring in their native tongue that they have invaded Florian space without the consent of the League and they should prepare to stand down. This is when things get tricky.

Being diplomatic will only infuriate them more. The Florian attitude could best be described as 'Why on Floria are you attempting to stand on protocol when you had the audacity to come to our homeworld unbidden?' Should they think of it, let the Travellers attempt an Average (8+) Diplomat check (SOC) but a successful check has the opposite effect, only adding to the chances that the Travellers will be fired upon. Calculate the Effect of the check and then roll 2D, adding the DM. If the result is 10+, the Florians immediately fire upon them with their laser turrets. Conversely, if the Travellers fail the Diplomat check, it only confuses the Florians, who do not understand the portent of the message.

The only way the Travellers can prevent the Florians from imposing their helter-skelter system defence doctrine is to do something out of the ordinary. This could be any number of things, including broadcasting a distress call to all foreign ships, or firing upon an uninvolved third party. This is not something that would be known intuitively by the Travellers but they do not have a ship's Library software for nothing. If someone looks up Florian hospitality customs, they learn that the best way to engage with them is to confound them first. The Barnai are inquisitive and will want to get to the bottom of things when something does not make sense.

After the Travellers have managed to spur their inquisitiveness, the captain of the interceptor fires up the universal translator and opens two-way communications with the Travellers ship. 'Normal' behaviour may resume and the Travellers may make their case for why they have come to the system without having filed a flight plan. If their reason is good enough, they might be escorted to the highport or downport and allowed to dock. If not, things return to square one and the Travellers will find themselves on the defensive, possibly against a full-blown attack.

THE FLORIANS

At this point in their lives, the Travellers may have come into contact with numerous alien species, some that seem reptilian, others that are aquatic, some that have five or six genders and many that do not seem sentient at all. Most of Humaniti in Charted Space seem relatively close to Terran or Vilani, the two most prevalent known variants. Even those whose cultures are extreme or whose governmental methods are different – for example, the Suerrat or Zhodani – fairly fall into line with other humans at some level. Not so with the Florians. They are just... different.

The Florians are dimorphic with two closely related subspecies, each vastly different in appearance and bearing, yet possessing more than 99 percent of the same DNA. The divergence between the two strains, Barnai and Feskal, were pin-pointedly directed, giving them significantly different appearances, intelligence levels and capabilities. Despite their differences, the two were made for each other, with the small, effete, large-cranium Barnai fully in command of the large, physically powerful, brutish and subservient Feskals. Every Barnai has up to four Feskal servants, as described on page 117.

Interacting with the Florians is often strange. They were designed by the Ancients to serve a very specific purpose but no one quite knows what that was. The Barnai are highly intelligent, capable of processing more information faster and with greater acuity than a typical human mind, and the Feskals are rather dull, but possessing great strength and fortitude. Feskals are completely subservient to their Barnai leaders, almost slave-like. The Barnai are not cruel to them but may seem dismissive or neglectful at times. For their part, the Feskals simply put up with it, devotedly waiting for their next instructions, which they carry out to the letter.

The relationship between the two might make socially conscious Travellers uncomfortable but any attempts to explore or even inspire rebellion or independence in the Feskals will be met with the same dim facial expression. They simply are not wired to do anything but work closely and comfortably with the Barnai. Some of the Travellers might never get used to it but short of massive alterations to their DNA, there is no way to change the two Florian dimorphs.

There are exceptions, of course. The Florian League could not have been developed as it has without some freethinking leaders but by and large, even the mavericks and rabblerousers in Florian society are only degrees away from the norm. One will not find a Florian firebrand standing atop their soapbox, preaching other ways to live. There are reasons for this which the Travellers may discover as they delve into the mysteries of Floria.

FLORIAN CHARACTERS

Florians can be created in the same way used to create Travellers in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, with the following modifications and limitations.

Characteristics
Feskals: STR+2, END+2, INT-2, EDU-2, SOC-2
Barnai: INT+2, EDU+2, STR-2, END-2

Careers
Feskals: Army, Citizen, Merchant or Navy.
Barnai: Agents, Army, Citizen, Merchants, Navy, Scholars or Scouts. During each term, roll 2D – on a 12+, the Barnai must take the Noble career next term for a single term. This signifies their participation in the Lottery, which determines who serves on their ruling councils.

A Barnai Traveller is always accompanied by a number of Feskal servants equal to 1+ their SOC DM. The Referee is free to create Florian characters with as much detail as desired but where applicable, the Trivial Characters rules can be employed instead. The guidelines above should give some sense of who the Florians are and the characteristic modifiers will come in handy if the Travellers decide to become embodied in Florian clone bodies.

HUJ BHEHET AND THE STARPORT OF WELCOMES

As they descend into the light gravity well of Floria towards the capital city of Huj Bhehet, they see how concentrated much of the civilisation is on one continent, in one enormous metropolis. The city covers approximately 20,000 square kilometres, a sprawling spectacle with dozens of arcology clusters, surrounded by broad expanses of residential and commercial areas where the populace lives. The size of the city is virtually incomprehensible and seems limitless when flying above it. If they approach at night, the visuals are more stunning, showing a dense concentration of urban lights where a good portion of the world's eight billion inhabitants live. There are gaggles of grav-vehicle traffic that somehow function efficiently despite the aerial congestion, and hordes of people moving about through the city which writhes like the surface of a disturbed ant hill.

The concave urban centre appears to be sinking into the ground, as if the weight of the buildings there are creating a depression. This borough hosts the Seven Towers, a collection of skyscraping structures that extend to heights far beyond the others. These structures adjust as gravity attempts to drive them into the earth like slowly driven daggers into the heart of the planet, balanced so that they remain perfectly upright while smaller structures around them have descended into the earth over the eons.

One thing that is noticeably absent in the urban landscape, or its outskirts for that matter, is the presence of utilities. There are no visible fusion power plants, waterworks or other such structures to be seen. They must be present for such a metropolis to exist but they are concealed from view.

During final approach, they see that there are not one but two major starports, one which serves the Florians and another for offworlders, the latter called the Starport of Welcomes. The Florian starport is the larger of the two and features a brutalist architecture with labyrinthine passageways between its buildings. Several large freighters and warships are docked there that might be better served at a highport. The Travellers do not have long to take in the spectacle before the view of the Florian starport is obscured from view by the skyscrapers adjacent to the downport metropolis.

HUJ BHEHET

ANCIENTS ARCHITECTURE
TELEPORTATION PORTAL
HUJ BHEHET DOWNPORT
ANCIENTS ARCHITECTURE
STARPORT OF WELCOMES
THE SEVEN TOWERS
TELEPORTATION PORTAL
TELEPORTATION PORTAL
ANCIENTS ARCHITECTURE
WELL OF LIGHTS

The Starport of Welcomes is a smaller affair but only in comparison to the enormous native port. Its architecture somewhat clumsily attempts to imitate design motifs seen in Imperial starports from decades past. It is crowded with ships, none of them larger than 800 tons.

Once they touch down into their docking bay, the action begins. A crew of Feskals bursts out onto the tarmac, eager to serve the visiting ship. In typical Florian fashion, they do some unexpected things. Instead of soliciting the ship's captain for refuelling, they check the ship's landing gear, noting any deficiencies and reinforcing them as they see fit. They point and gesticulate and seem to take note of other problems that they see on the hull and then depart inexplicably. If the Travellers want refuelling services, they will have to find out how to ask for them.

THE CAPITAL AND THE WARSHIP

Huj Bhehet is much like any other advanced human city. Its citizens live within its boundaries in residential zones. There is commerce, diversions and entertainment, industry and the infrastructure to support its inhabitants.

The main difference is that much of what they have was not exactly earned. The Florians were genetically engineered to be servants to the Ancients and had technology gifted to them. The exact nature of their servitude is difficult to determine. Their dimorphism provides two types of servants: intelligent managers

JOINING THE CROWD

The Travellers can fit in if they want to. They can *become* Florians. Virtually all Florians are manufactured clones, created in the vats of their homeworld. Rare exceptions are feral Feskals who, left in the wilderness or abandoned on alien worlds, spontaneously develop male and female sex organs in order to reproduce. It is a strange adaptation but who can explain the Ancients' design ethics?

Clones are created and have brain patterns installed. No one knows how many patterns there are and despite a seeming lack of diversity among the Florians, millions of unique templates have been identified by anthropologists.

If the Travellers can gain access to the cloning facility, they can use Naalir's embodiment technology to install their consciousnesses into newly minted Florian bodies. They can even choose what they want to be: Barnai or Feskal.

PLAYING BARNAI AND FESKAL

This part of the narrative might cause some crossover between the roles of Traveller and Referee. Allow the Travellers to do their best to play the part they have chosen but recognise that there are limitations to what they can do in each body.

Resistance to Barnai authority is not in the mental makeup of a Feskal no matter how much a Traveller might want to be the first revolutionary among them. Likewise, Barnai are accustomed to commanding Feskals and use them to perform all sorts of tasks. They are an extension of the Barnai will. Given those limitations, it might seem like taking a Barnai clone is the only viable choice but that is not the case. When not being commanded by Barnai, Feskals do have free will and they operate much like a typical human. They have lower intelligence but should not be played as idiots. Their reduced intelligence reflects their inability to think creatively or resist Barnai authority. Other than that, they have their own hopes, dreams and agency. Therefore, if a Traveller has their consciousness installed in the body of a Feskal, they can operate freely for the most part. It is only when they are with a Barnai that they must respond to their commands.

Placing their consciousnesses in Florian clones can give the Travellers access to regions of the planet that would otherwise be difficult to obtain. The depths of the great warship, the bases of the Seven Towers, Floria Downport and the fulcrum of the Well of Lights are all forbidden to offworlders but in Florian bodies, the Travellers may come up with a suitable ruse to describe why they have delved into restricted areas, places where only the Florians are allowed to see the wonders of the Ancients technology that is their birthright.

and hardy labourers. They have been altered and specialised from the original human genome to the point where they no longer fully resemble the species from which they came. The Ancients departed the scene long ago, leaving them behind. With the remnants of human ingenuity left to them, they were able to build a civilisation. Most Ancients sites found in Charted Space are not fully intact, nor do all of them have a client species present to manage them. Floria has both, which makes it unique.

Atop the foundation given to them by the Ancients, the Florians have created the industrial and commercial infrastructure to maintain a small empire but it is highly dysfunctional in many ways. However, on Floria they are close to the source. There are multiple active Ancients sites on the planet that support their society. None are so powerful as Huj Bhehet, whose structure, unbeknownst to the masses, sits atop a buried treasure.

The lack of surface infrastructure in Huj Bhehet is a luxury made possible to the Florians by the technology hidden underground. The city has a secret: Buried beneath it is an Ancients warship that provides much of what the city needs. Its anti-matter power plants provide enough energy for the entire city and its quantum reactors draw additional power from other dimensions. The warship is alive. It extends tendrils in all directions, creating tunnels and extending itself to feed the sprawl of Huj Bhehet, almost as if it knows what they need, quietly working to provide for its children. It has created waterworks, telecommunications channels and an expansive power grid, all at the direction of its Florian subjects and the subconscious will of its convoluted mind.

The dreadnought is enormous, perhaps a million tons or more by Imperial standards. Within and without its hull, there are teleportation portals. Those within were built to serve the crew. Those outside the hull, now found in various subterranean locations, were moved by the Florians to hasten transportation. This is a phenomenon seen in many cities on the planet, where the Florians have extracted bits and pieces of Ancients technology and deposited it elsewhere, where it can be of greater practical use.

THE CLONE TANKS

The main cloning facility on Floria is not in Huj Bhehet. It is far away, on another continent, hidden away in the city of Drix Neh'hebid, concealed within a mountain in a more temperate zone of the planet. It is exceedingly difficult to reach but its output is enormous, enough to sustain population levels for the entire League. However, it is not the only one of its kind. It would be disastrous if the League were dependent on just one site for all its population needs. One pandemic or enemy attack could wipe out the species.

A secondary cloning facility lies under Huj Bhehet, adjacent to the warship wreck that powers the city. Should the Travellers desire to be embodied in Florian clones, this is where it will happen.

Gaining access to the facility will require some effort but it can be done by infiltrating and learning to use its control system. Shortly after the departure of the Ancients, the Florians built interfaces that allowed them to use the cloning technology. The controls built by the Ancients were arcane and difficult to use, built for a different type of mind. Creating the interface was one of the key early achievements of the Florians after their abandonment. Had they not built the interface, they would have died off in a single generation.

THE SEVEN TOWERS

The Council of the Stars governs from the Seven Towers, the great fully intact Ancients-built edifices at the centre of the city. The full utility of the towers is unknown but one function they have is communication. Their spires serve as antennae for satellites and space stations that long ago fell to the surface. Over the centuries, Florians have built generations of satellites, orbital structures and spacecraft, all of which depend upon the Seven Towers.

The towers have many other functions as well. The Florians discover new features all the time, some of which result in groundbreaking technology advancements and others that come to nothing. The Council uses the towers' wide-open spaces to convene, study, legislate and lead the Florian people.

THE WELL OF LIGHTS

To visitors, the Well of Lights is a tourist attraction. Intense beams of light extend from the depths of an open gap, emanating from unknown sources, with the dust and pollution of the city undulating in the light to create a spectacular show. The gap is covered by a translucent screen that prevents physical access to the depths of the well.

Most Florians do not know exactly what it is but a select few members of the science council have been permitted to explore its depths. It is accessible by a hidden tunnel that extends from the warship. The study of the well is ongoing but some report that members of the scientific team disappear at an alarming rate. Only the gifted scientists who are granted access know that it leads to 'the Portal' a vast and powerful device whose function is unknown.

WELCOME TO FLORIA

After docking their ship, the Travellers are met by a Barnai, Yevuh Mut!tuf, their alleged guide and protector. 'They' – use of the neutral is necessary, for the Barnai are neither female nor male – are attended by two Feskals who cater to the Travellers' every wish, including carrying any heavy baggage they might have. Yevuh is a Florian emissary whose job it is to show offworlders the things they are allowed to see. The tour will include:

- The **Starport of Welcomes** in its entirety – it is not much different than other starports in function and will probably be the place where the Travellers are the most culturally comfortable but its style is strictly Yggdrasilian. Centuries ago, it was designed by Meezen Tyd, niece of the 75th Golden Queen of Yggdrasil. Its decadence and Old Sindalian motifs are unmistakeable. After a time, the Travellers begin to get the feeling they are being led by the nose and they have not even left the starport yet.
- An anti-grav tour of the **Seven Towers** – the Travellers are not initially permitted to enter any of them but do get the chance to fly around the towers either in a chauffeured air/raft or with grav belts. Both seem dangerously exposed to other gravitic traffic.
- A chance to peer down the **Well of Lights**, again either aboard an air/raft or while using borrowed grav belts. This enormous sinkhole-looking aperture, penetrating through the crust of the planet, descends hundreds of metres. Deep below, powerful light emanates from an unknown source. The Travellers are urged to wear protective goggles lest the light affect their vision. Despite the intense light, the Travellers note that the hole does not emanate strong heat. They are advised against flying too closely. It has defences that disintegrate anything that attempts to approach too closely.
- **A teleportation portal** – there are three different types of teleportation portals in the city. Each connects with others of its type. Upon entering, one enters a tesseract, an extra-dimensional open area that occupies more space than it seemingly should. Within the tesseract, one sees portals at various walkable distances, each of which enables the user to exit out of the other portals of its kind elsewhere in the city. Each are numbered in Florian script and have a view of the outside so the Travellers know where they are going. One has only a few seconds to select their destination portal before the tesseract kicks them out randomly through one of the other portals. One of the three portal types leads to portals elsewhere on the planet.
- **Ancients architecture** – they are bandied about the city and given the opportunity to view alleged Ancients architecture from both near and far. It is indeed wondrous but there is more to see elsewhere despite the limitations imposed upon them by their guide. The Travellers may confirm this with a simple look at their Library software, which details the presence of other sites the world over. Here in Huj Bhehet, there are alleged underground structures but Yevuh does not seem to be interested in showing them. When asked, he tries to divert their attention or change the subject. If pressed, he kindly reminds the Travellers they are guests and they should comport themselves as such. His voice will be tinged with menace and his guardian Feskals react as if they sense their master's apprehension. They glare at the Travellers and move intimidatingly towards them, defending the Barnai.
- The final destination is the capitol, a rotunda-like structure where the **Council of the Stars** – all Barnai, of course – makes announcements, issues decrees and disseminates public information. Governance occurs at the Seven Towers and the capitol is what might be described as a public affairs office. It is unlikely that any of the Travellers speak Florian but if they do or if they have a universal translator, they can understand the announcements. For a governing body, they sound remarkably confused, as if they have no idea what is going on in their powerful interstellar polity. At the mezzanine level sits the Assemblage of Peers, a group of former councillors who are brought on to advise the present council. One of these individuals takes notice of the Travellers; more on that, further on.

EXPEDITION FROM RESEARCH STATION DELTA

The Travellers just cannot get away from the Imperial Research Directorate, even out here in remote Florian space. Research Station Delta, located on nearby Dostoevsky, has a campus on Floria, which studies the relationship of various Ancients sites in the region, including those of Dostoevsky and Floria which, on the surface have little in common but in structure, materials, common technology and aesthetics, the two sites may well have been created by the same branch of the Ancients.

The campus is small, with a faculty and staff of only 25, not enough to qualify as a research station of its own, with rotations by 10–20 graduate students and other academics at any given time. The regent of the facility is Dr. Arkova Daliamere, who is serving a two-month residency before she returns to Dostoevsky with the findings of her research.

Dr. Daliamere can be a resource for the Travellers if they want to gain another perspective on Floria or simply need some normalcy from the weirdness of Florian society.

THE WISDOM OF THE LOTTERY

Florian government is conducted by councils comprised of Barnai who are elected by lottery. Councillors serve for four years at the local, planetary or League level. The Council of Stars is the top level. Elected Barnai spend the majority of their terms learning the job and have usually just acquired the skills to govern during that time. The true task of governing is performed by ex-councillors, many of whom are members of the Assemblage of Peers, the quiet group of Barnai who sit on the mezzanine while the entertaining show of confused councillors bickers and queries with each other below.

Widj en Lodn, a member of the assemblage, intuitively recognises that there is something unusual about the Travellers and sends two Feskals to follow them. Separately, the Barnai investigates their ship – which is quite unusual – and believes they are up to some sort of treachery. Widj does not want to expose the Travellers for their 'perfidy' but rather to team up with them. Widj is not alone in their quest to learn more about Floria and after confronting the Travellers, they would like to introduce them to a secret club of sorts.

The introduction of Widj to the narrative may occur if the Travellers take the initiative to meet members of the government, or when they notice they are being followed by two Feskals, Leibn and Ud' Hokus (who are not exceedingly stealthy; hard to be sneaky when you are well over two metres tall and built like a professional wrestler), or by returning to their ship at some point to notice that Widj has been investigating them. Widj may have either purposely left their calling card (for example, with a recorded holovid message) or might have inadvertently left their access ID number showing on one of the ship's terminals after they hacked the Travellers' security. No matter how it occurs, the Travellers have an opportunity to meet the nosy Barnai ex-Councillor.

WIDJ'S PROPOSITION

Widj was an astrogator aboard a Florian megafreighter which made its way to and from the Imperium along the Florian Route, a well-trodden path between the stars that leads from the Florian League to the world of Fist (Trojan Reach 2918, B789430-C) in the Imperium. Over the course of their career, they got to know and understand Imperial culture and politics very well. Their hobby was collecting images and statistics of Imperial starships from the most common free traders to rare custom one-offs. Widj has access to the Seven Towers' communication array and the Travellers' ship caught their eye. They sensed something unusual about the Travellers and sought to meet with them.

Widj seems to intuitively know the Travellers are present on Floria for a reason and the Florian wants to help... within limits. Widj is curious to know and understand more about the unsolved mysteries of their people and senses that the Travellers might be the catalyst that makes that knowledge attainable. To that end, Widj wants to be the Travellers' tour guide, granting them access to the secrets of Floria in return for their insights.

BREAK-IN

Accepting Widj's help is not the only way to break into the undercity of Huj Bhehet. There are other ways. The Travellers might be suspicious of his offer and prefer to do it alone. If so, there are three other ways to break in.

The Fissures: In and around the Seven Towers, there are fissures that one may climb into to crawl into a cave system. After a little spelunking – have the Travellers make an Average (8+) Survival check (DEX) to get through the caves – they find the undercity.

The Portals: The teleportation portals whose icons match those of the undercity (see the map on page 118) can take the Travellers directly into the subterranean abode. However, they are restricted. They need to either be registered for biometric authentication – which requires you to be a Florian – or a visiting delegate's travel pass. If the Travellers watch one of the portals for a sufficient period of time and make a successful Difficult (10+) Investigate check (1D hours, INT), they see one or more of these items in use, hanging from a lanyard, attached to a belt, or similar.

The Well: With a set of plasma welding tools, they can breech the translucent cover of the Well of Lights but rappelling to its base is extremely dangerous. It can be done but failure likely means death. After cutting a sizeable enough hole to climb through, they can descend to the base if they have a long enough rope. Each Traveller must make a successful Very Difficult (12+) Athletics (DEX) check to get to the bottom alive. Otherwise, they are incinerated by the security system, a bolt of energy from unseen apertures along the interior of the tube.

THE SECRET SIX

If he gains their confidence, Widj invites the Travellers to a meeting of the 'Secret Six', five Barnai, all former members of the Council, each of whom theorise about the nature of Florian existence. The Barnai are naturally inquisitive and cannot fathom why the secret of their origin is being kept from them. They want to know more but those who ask too many questions or speak out too loudly tend to be 'disappeared', a rarity in Florian civilisation where crime is unusual.

The Secret Six believe there is an outsider in the undercity, someone or something that hunts people who get too close to the source, who begin to figure out the mysteries of Floria. They want help and they believe that good fortune has brought the Travellers to them for this reason and this reason alone.

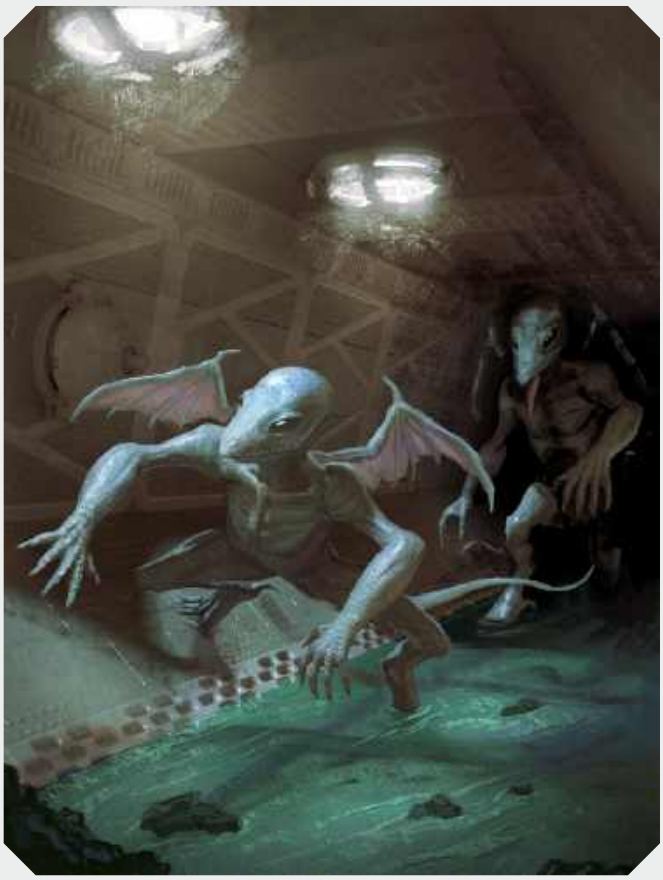
THE WORLD BELOW

They are correct that there is an outsider but perhaps the word 'insider' would be more accurate. Creatures dwell in the depths of the city, around the great ship that occupies its subterranean nexus. The undercity abounds with small rat- and lizard-like creatures but there are proto-Chirpers as well, wild and incapable of forming the primitive civilisations of Chirper populations found elsewhere in Charted Space. They are solitary, meeting only to mate. The only social bonds they have are between mothers and young, which last only until their offspring can hunt for themselves. They eat what vermin they can find in the vast underworld of Huj Bhehet.

The proto-Chirpers rarely pose a threat to the Florians, cowering in their presence if cornered. The Florians see them as harmless animals and shoo them away when they are encountered. What the Florians do not know is that there is one among them that is unique. One with cunning intelligence, one who has been present for all their long history. This unique individual is known as Seven Point Five.

SEVEN POINT FIVE

Seven Point Five is a clone, designed to blend in with the proto-Chirpers. The clone contains a copied consciousness of one of the Ancients. To be exact, it contains only a portion of the original's consciousness, retaining only the desired knowledge, memories, goals and objectives that the source intelligence wanted it to have.



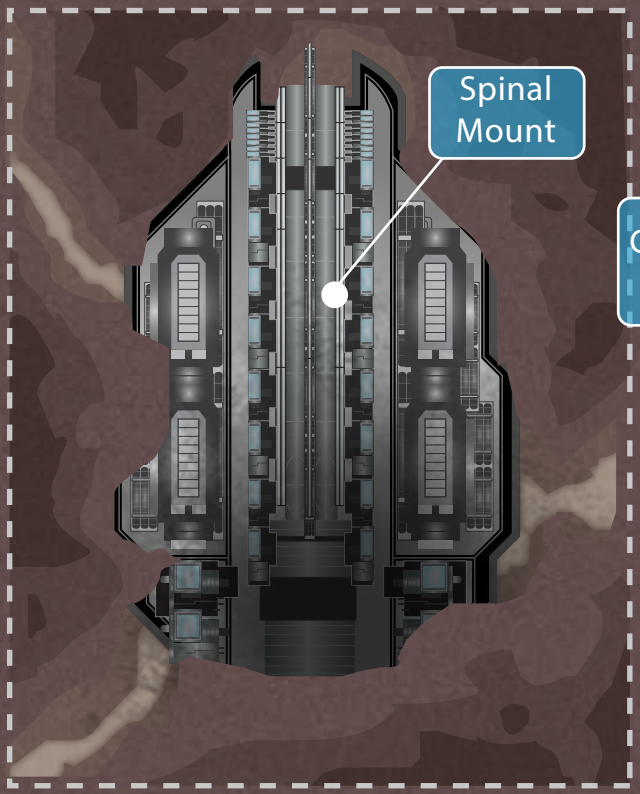
Animal	Hits	Speed
Proto-Chirper	7	9m
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Recon 0, Stealth 1, Survival 1	
Attacks	Claws (1D)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Heightened Senses	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

It is a sexless proto-Chirper, being neither male nor female, but other than that it is difficult to discern from its peers. If killed, a new Seven Point Five will be made at an avatar fabricator deep within the bowels of the warship. In fact, several Seven Point Fives can be in operation at once if desired but generally it deploys only one at a time unless more are needed.

EXPLORING THE DEEP

The Travellers, with or without assistance from Widj and other members of the Secret Six, must find a way to enter the subterranean depths of Floria to investigate further and discover its secrets.

ANCIENTS STARSHIP



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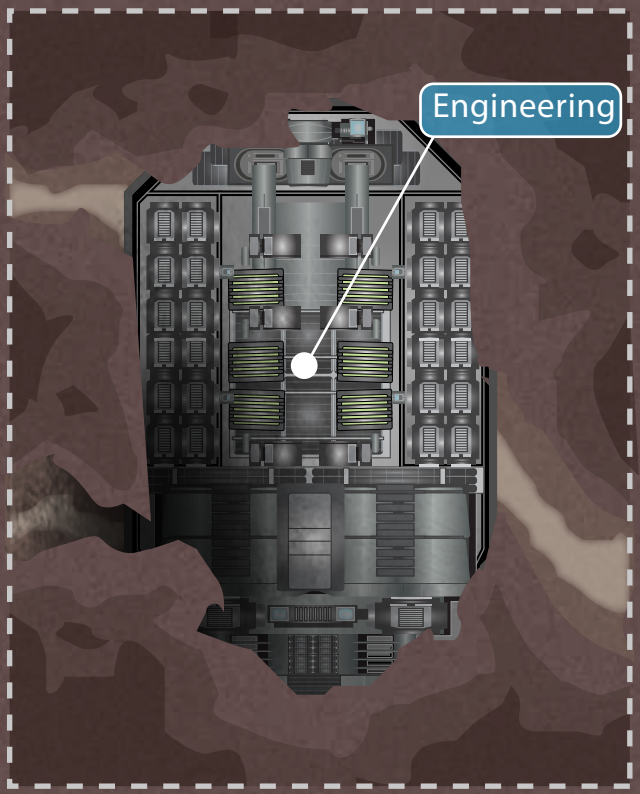

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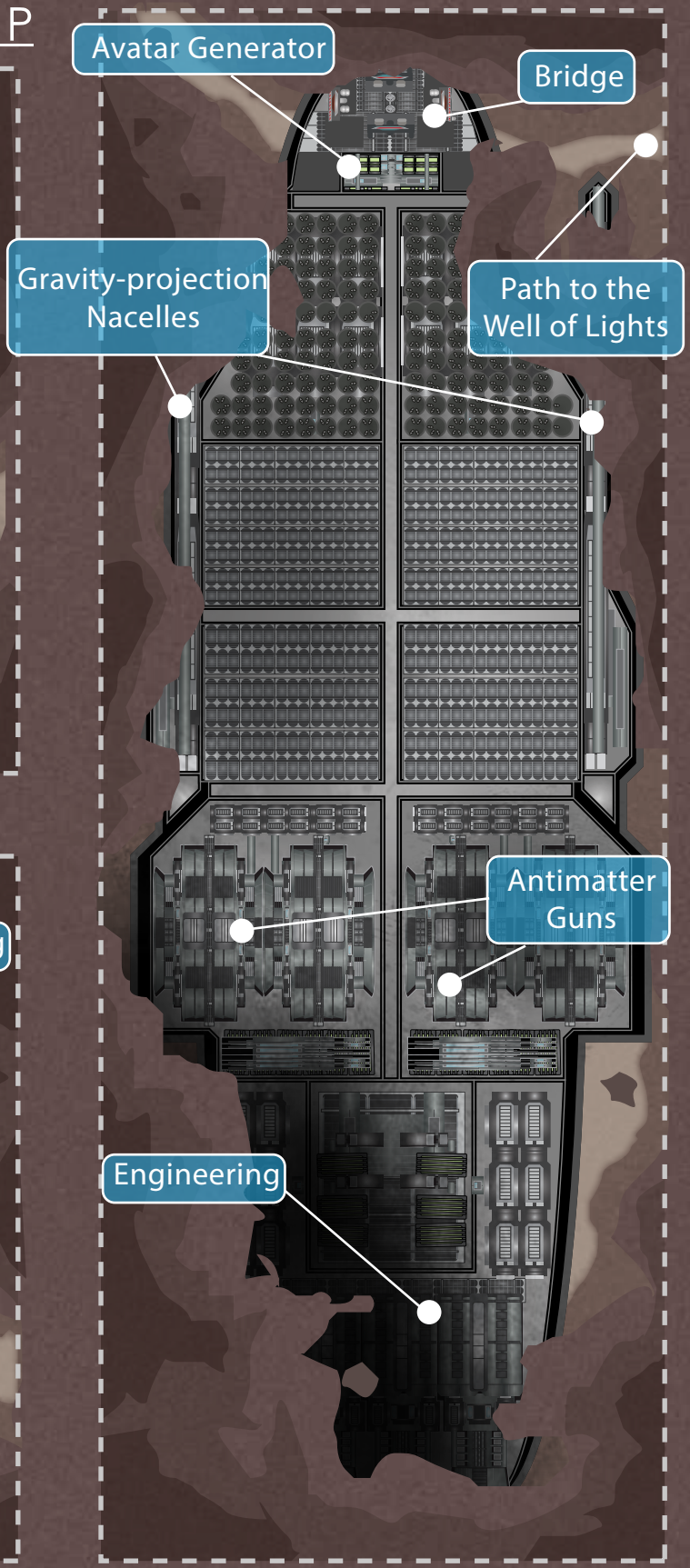

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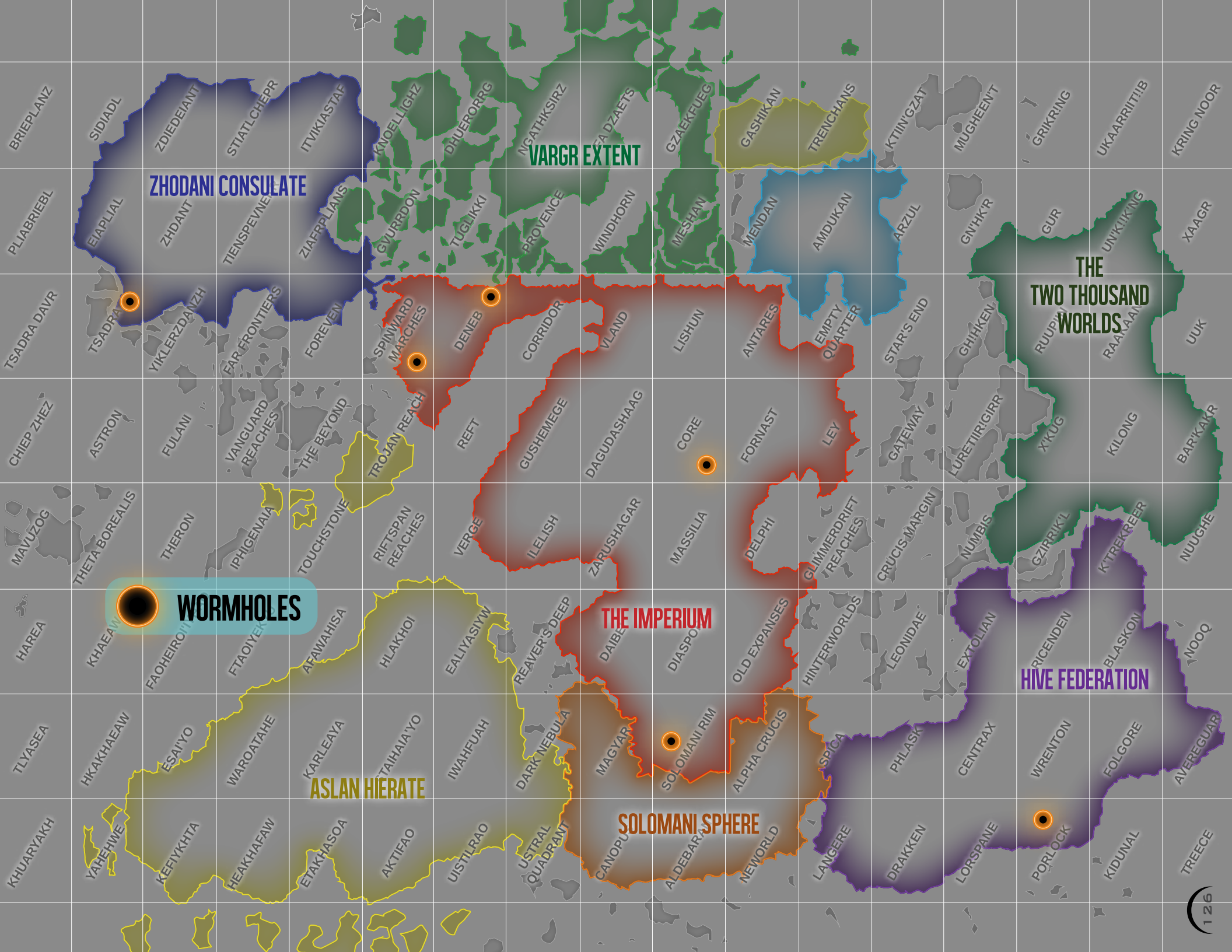
ZHODANI CONSULATE
VARGR EXTENT
THE TWO THOUSAND WORLDS
THE IMPERIUM
HIVE FEDERATION
ASLAN HIERATE
SOLOMANI SPHERE
WORMHOLES
BRIEPLANZ
SIDIADL
ZDIEDEIANT
STIATLCHEPR
ITVIKIASTAF
KNOELLIGHZ
DHUERORRG
NGATHKSIRZ
EA DZAETS
GZAEKFUEG
GASHIKAN
TRENCHANS
KTIIN'GZAT
MUGHEEN'T
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UKAARRIITI!B
KRING NOOR
PLIABRIEBL
EIAPLIAL
ZHDANT
TIENSPEVNE
ZIAFRPLIANS
GVURRDON
TUGLIKKI
PROVENCE
WINDHORN
MESHAN
MENDAN
AMDUKAN
ARZUL
GN'HK'R
GUR
UN'K!!K'NG
XAAGR
TSADRA DAVR
TSADRA
YIKLERZDANZH
FAR FRONTIERS
FOREVEN
SPINWARD MARCHES
DENEB
CORRIDOR
VLAND
LISHUN
ANTARES
EMPTY QUARTER
STAR'S END
GHIHKEN
RUUPW
RAAKAAN
UUK
CHIEP ZHEZ
ASTRON
FULANI
VANGUARD REACHES
THE BEYOND
TROJAN REACH
REFT
GUSHEMEGE
DAGUDASHAAG
CORE
FORNAST
LEY
GATEWAY
LURETIIRIGIRR
X'KUG
KILONG
BAR'KAKR
MAVUZOG
THETA BOREALIS
THERON
IPHIGENAIA
TOUCHSTONE
RIFTSPAN REACHES
VERGE
ILELISH
ZARUSHAGAR
MASSILIA
DELPHI
GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES
CRUCIS MARGIN
NUMBIS
GZIRRIK'L
K'TREKREER
NUUGHE
HAREA
KHAEAW
FAOHEIRO
FTAOIYEK
AFAWAHISA
HLAKHOI
EALIYASIYW
REAVER'S DEEP
DAIBE
DIASPO
OLD EXPANSES
HINTERWORLDS
LEONIDAE
EXTOLIAN
RICENDEN
BLASKON
NOOQ
TLYASEA
HKAKHAEAW
ESAI'YO
WAROATAHE
KARLEAYA
TAIHAIA'YO
IWAHFUAH
DARK NEBULA
MAGYAR
SOLOMANI RIM
ALPHA CRUCIS
SPICA
PHLASK
CENTRAX
WRENTON
FOLGORE
AVEREGUAR
KHUARYAKH
YAHEHWE
KEFIYKHTA
HEAKHAEAW
ETAKHASOA
AKTIFAO
UISTILRAO
USTRAL QUADRANT
CANOPUS
ALDEBARAN
NEWORLD
LANGERE
DRAKKEN
LORSPANE
PORLOCK
KIDUNAL
TREECE

One teleportation portal leads to the fulcrum of a wormhole generator. One may enter the wormhole in a vehicle, starship or even an inert chamber provided that it is a vacuum-sealed container with life support. Anyone that simply walks into the wormhole portal will be destroyed instantly. Just coming close to it should provide warning enough. When near the portal, unprotected individuals begin to feel a prickly sensation that slowly becomes discomfort and finally pain. Coming within five metres of the portal inflicts 1D damage per round, which becomes 2D per round if they continue to approach closer.

Towards the outer wall of the chamber, there is an alien kiosk of sorts with a large dial on it. A Traveller in a vacc suit, HEV suit, or something similar with a modicum of radiation protection, can approach the kiosk. Holograms pop up and flit about the kiosk if the Travellers turn the dial. They animate some part of the process but the messages are cryptic. An expert in Ancients technology and artefacts has a chance at knowing what they mean but an astute linguist could decipher the characters and symbols as well. Each setting on the dial shows a different icon, accompanied by some figures in a script reminiscent of Oynprith, the Droyne language. Allow the Travellers to make an Difficult (10+) Language (any) check (EDU) to identify it, even if they do not speak Oynprith.

The icons and numerical figures represent the names and coordinates of each wormhole destination. The Travellers can translate the text by making a Difficult (10+) Language (Oynprith) or Science (archaeology) check (1D hours, EDU). After a successful translation is made, they must make a successful Difficult (10+) Astrogation check (2Dx10 minutes, EDU) to determine approximate locations, most of which are in the empty space between worlds, the 'blank hexes' on the astrogation map of Charted Space.

When a different setting is selected, the appearance of space on the other side of the portal changes. Nebulous gases change to different colours, constellations shift, some have planets or asteroids and others do not. It is like looking through an enormous eye at a location far away. Most are within the boundaries of Charted Space but fully half are elsewhere in the galaxy; one near the galactic core and the others on other galactic arms, tens of thousands of light years from Floria.

The Travellers may enter the wormhole portal to be transported across the galaxy to a desired location, but it would be advisable to enter in a jump-capable spacecraft; otherwise, they may find themselves stranded in deep space, far from home. Unfortunately, it will not be easy to get a ship down here. With some excavation, they might be able to do it but an even more effective solution would be to activate the Ancient warship and use its gravity-projection weapons to encompass and lift the wormhole generator from its subterranean pit.

CHAMBER OF HORRORS

The Florians are allowed to use the Ancients warship and its technology... to a point. The limits of their license are managed by Seven Point Five and their menagerie of creatures. The most basic of these are the proto-Chirpers. These are mostly seen as a nuisance that the Florians would just as soon ignore but Seven Point Five uses them to do his bidding. Should one of the Florian scientists or technicians using the warship for its technology begin to delve too deeply into its data stores, or should they threaten to enter the Well of Lights, Seven Point Five eliminates them. The all-too-curious tend to vanish into the night if they push their luck. The same will happen to the Travellers.

Some of the horrors that could be unleashed upon them include the following.

Kanderson's Greymasses are fully described in the *Traveller Companion*. Here is a brief summary of its abilities; it feeds mainly on plant and animal matter that drifts into it or blunders into a semi-camouflaged maw where it is trapped by muscle contractions. The maw can crush small creatures but cannot harm something as large as a human's foot. However, it is difficult to pull anything out once a Greymass has a good grip on it and digestive acids slowly dissolve anything that does not escape.

To get out of a Greymass, make a Difficult (10+) STR check. DM+2 applies for each of up to four people assisting the trapped Traveller. One attempt can be made to free a Traveller every 10 minutes. The victim will sustain 1D damage from acid every 10 minutes, including the period in which they are freed. The greymass is hard to kill by conventional means. Shooting or stabbing does not work, so it must be burned, lasered or have bright lights shone upon it. It is typically unable to 'swallow' more than a foot but will try to consume additional body parts if it can. The Greymass is unable to let go of anything that is still moving and has quite a grip.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Kanderson's Greymass	4	Essentially Static
Skills	None	
Attacks	Acid (1D)	
Traits	Dispersed, Toxic (0m, 1D)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Filter	

Animal	Hits	Speed
Acid Wasp	3	10m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1	
Attacks	Stinger (D3), Acid (1D)	
Traits	Small (-4)	
Behaviour	Omnivore, Particulate, Strange	

Seven Point Five releases and places several greymasses in dark locations where the Travellers may blunder into them. Once stuck in place, it sends a gaggle of crazed proto-Chirpers or acid wasps to do away with the captured specimen.

Acid wasps are found on many worlds. They are resilient insectoids that thrive in standard and dense atmospheres. They swarm in groups of 2D+4 and are difficult to kill due to their size and agility, with two modes of attack and one defence. When attacking unarmoured small targets, they sting repeatedly until the target is dead and then leisurely pick at the carcass like vultures. If the target is armoured, large or resilient to their stingers, they attempt to grapple with the target in order to inject their stinger for a prolonged period of time (1–2 rounds). If they make a successful opposed grapple check, they successfully apply their stinger to the target and release acid, inflicting an additional 1D damage. The acid burns away armour at a rate of one half the damage (round up).

If one half or more of a swarm is wounded or killed, they are dispersed and fly off, releasing a pheromone that causes the Strange effect. Refer to page 94 of the *Traveller Companion* for details of this effect.

Seven Point Five will employ one of their three animal types to pester or disperse interlopers, shooing them away from sections of the warship or the surrounding tunnels. If persistent, armed and armoured, they will usually combine two or more in some sort of concerted attack, perhaps using the acid wasps to drive a trespasser into an area plastered with greymasses or a den of crazed proto-Chirpers. Failing that, they will orchestrate various 'industrial accidents' – ceiling collapses, poisonous gas leaks, acidic starship component leaks and so forth.

TURNING THE TABLES

The Travellers may attempt to put a stop to the animal attacks. While the Barnai are highly intelligent and certainly capable of devising a counter to Seven Point Five's attacks, they lack creativity and their reverence for their machines works as a mental block. Those who tend the machines have a fear of 'upsetting' them and therefore subconsciously prevent themselves from finding a way to solve the problem before they even get started. They have a healthy fear of the machines that protect and serve them. The machines giveth and the machines taketh away.

Despite this fear, the Florians have sometimes employed Barnai to clear, fumigate or otherwise cleanse the tunnels of these nasty creatures so they may explore its wonders at leisure but all have come to a sinister end thus far. For the Travellers to outwit Seven Point Five, they will have to employ creativity and find a way to determine who the source of the attacks is. A combination of forensic investigation, reconnaissance and stealth might be able to accomplish the task and enable the Travellers to find out who is 'hiding behind the curtain' in the depths below the city.

Should the Travellers get close to Seven Point Five, they will armour up and either defend themself or proactively attempt to eliminate the Travellers directly. Seven Point Five's description, including equipment, may be found on page 132.

COMING TO CONCLUSIONS

Naalir sent the Travellers to far-flung Floria to determine the nature of a species it deems a threat. The nature of that threat is open to interpretation. On the surface, the Florians appear to be exactly what they are said to be; servants of the long-departed Ancients who now operate one of the more sophisticated collections of Ancients artefacts in Charted Space.

Depending how the Travellers interpret things, they may believe there is no direct threat at all. There are many secrets to be found in the undercity but perhaps the most shocking of all is the wormhole generator, a technology unlike any other. Just what the device is for is unknown. It could enable a user to send whatever it wants to several distant locales. Its dial appears to only have 12 settings but that might not be the limit of its abilities. Further study would be required to find out. Whatever the case may be, the Travellers have what they came for; the secret of the Florians.

They may confront Seven Point Five if they like; they might even find its avatar fabricator and shut it down but the sentient Ancients warship will simply create another. As for the warship, its controls are cryptic and difficult to use. The Travellers could spend years deciphering the controls but if they did, they might be able to dislodge it from its subterranean abode, enabling it to rise to the world above. It would expose the mystery of the Ancients but it would also destroy the city centre and ruin Huj Bhehet's infrastructure... and to what end? The Florians remain an enigmatic species but whether they factor into the Travellers' future remains to be seen.

RETURN VOYAGE

The Travellers have numerous choices when it comes to transporting their consciousnesses back to the Core for reintegration. They can use the skipping stone method, fly one of the prototypes if they obtained one, or hop into a wormhole portal and hope for the best. They might simply escape Floria and return to Dpres, where they can ship their data back on the Express Boat Network.

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

YARY JAXON

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	8	Astrogation 1, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Gun Combat 0, Jack-of-All-Trades 2, Mechanic 0, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Science (physics) 2, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	6	EDU	9	
END	10	SOC	7	
WEAPONS		Laser Pistol (3D+3)		
ARMOUR		Vacc Suit (+10)		

Jaxon is a high-ranking scout stationed at the Pashus Scout Base. He is tired of all the red tape that prevents the Jumpspace Institute from being able to fully test their prototypes and would be willing to work with the Travellers if they have ideas about how to advance the programme.

OFFWORLD SOLUTIONS MERCENARIES

		SKILLS
STR	10	AOC (soldier) 3
DEX	9	
END	9	
EQUIPMENT		Maser Rifle (4D+3, AP 10), Stunner (3D, Stun, Zero-G), Bonded-ultradense Polycarapace (+18)

Maser Rifle: Uses maser (within the microwave area of the electromagnetic spectrum) technology to create a weapon that penetrates armour well and packs a decent punch.

Bonded-ultradense Polycarapace: Built with the same design principles as polycarapace armour, bonded-ultradense uses similar processes that are used to create advanced starship armour but with different materials and on the level of personal defence.

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Power Pack Cost	Traits
Maser Rifle	16	500	4D+3	3	Cr18000	100	Cr5000	AP 10, Zero-G

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Bonded-ultradense Polycarapace	+18	16	—	2	Cr50000	None

DR. ARKOVA DALIAMERE

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Female	54

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	12	Diplomat 2, Drive 0, Electronics (remote ops) 2, Investigate 2, Language (Florian) 2, Medic 0, Science (archaeology) 3, Science (xenobiology) 1, Seafarer (submarine) 2,
DEX	6	EDU	12	
END	8	SOC		

Dr. Daliamere is a distinguished academic and a potential point of contact for the Travellers while they are on Floria.

WIDJ EN LODN

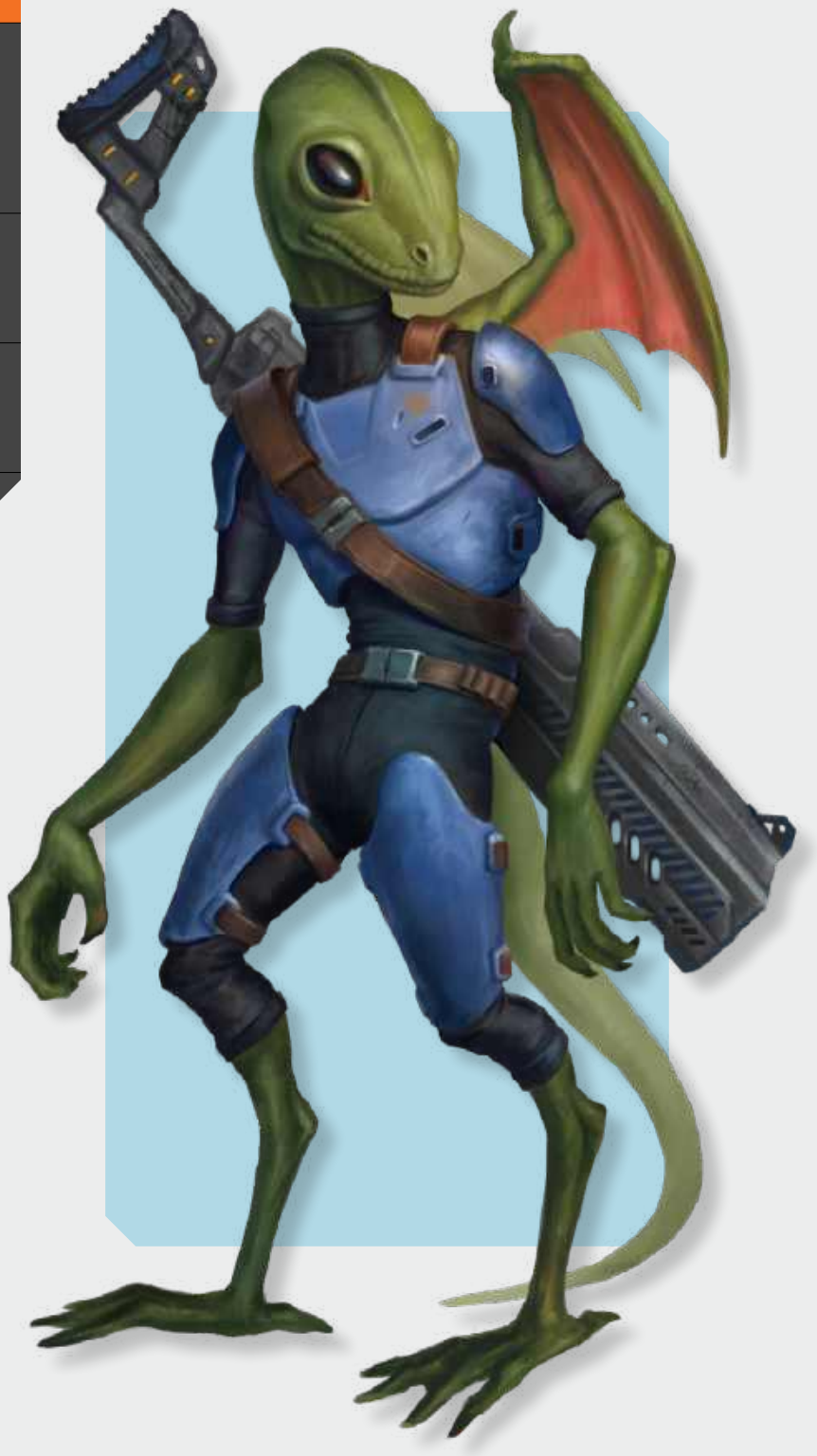
SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Florian	Male	

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	4	INT	13	Carouse 1, Deception 1, Drive 0, Flyer 0, Gun Combat 0, Investigate 2, Language (Galanglic) 2, Medic 1, Recon 1, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	7	EDU	11	
END	6	SOC	10	

The Barnai are born from a selection of templates. Whichever one was used to make Widj in the cloning vats of Floria forgot to put the social and intellectual inhibitors in place. Widj wants to expose the secrets of their people and their world, and they hope to get the Travellers' help to do it.

SEVEN POINT FIVE (ENHANCED CLONE) PROTO-CHIRPER CLONE

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7 (4)	INT	11	Animals (handling) 2, Athletics (dexterity) 3, Electronics (computers) 2, Engineer 0, Mechanic 2, Melee (natural) 1
DEX	9 (6)	EDU	9	
END	5	SOC	4	
WEAPONS	Claws (1D). If armed and armoured, Advanced Poly Carapace (+16), Laser Carbine (4D+3, Zero-G)			
AUGMENTS	Advanced Neural Jack (TL18), Hypertense Muscular Bridging (STR +3, DEX +3, movement +3 metres			



Seven Point Five is a cloned avatar, created by the subterranean Ancients warship on Floria. Biologically, it is an uncaste Droyne with some characteristics of the Technician caste. The ship's conscious intelligence uses it as a spy, a tool, a messenger and, if necessary, an assassin. If it kills, it does so using indirect methods: poisoning, radiation, industrial accidents, explosives and so forth. Its favourite method of killing its enemies is using various animals to do the job. See Chamber of Horrors on page 127 for more information.

Normally, Seven Point Five prefers to wander the undercity naked, so that it may blend in with the proto-Chirpers but if directly threatened or it determines that it must arm itself to fight more challenging foes, it dons its arms and armaments for direct combat. It will also even the odds by creating up to five other instances of itself, arming them similarly.

SUITS

Each embodiment is different than the others. The Travellers rarely know what to expect when their consciousnesses awaken in new vessels but each time they must adjust to the uncanny valley of living as a clone, android or robot. The psychological adjustment can be jarring. The more foreign the embodiment, the more challenging it is to acclimate oneself. In this adventure, the Travellers experience their most difficult transition of all.

Naalir sends them to distant Aluudi, an independent world in the Glimmerdraft Reaches that is said to have an innovative approach to conscious intelligence that might serve as a resource for them.

When they collectively awaken in embodiments, expecting to be in Gaumaudi, the capital city of Aluudi (Glimmerdrift Reaches 0703, A434985-E), they instead find themselves embodied in suits of automated battle dress. The clone vessels that were expected are nowhere to be found and Naalir's secure consciousness packet had to make an adjustment on the fly. Given the circumstances on the planet, hardy robotic vessels seemed the best way to go.

Depending on the order the Referee decides to run these adventures, the Travellers may have already experienced being embodied in a robot chassis but this will be quite different. The suits are effectively robots but also meant to serve as armour for roughly human-sized sophonts. Normally, said sophonts would rely on the suits to protect them from the dangers of the battlefield and hostile environments. However, something has gone wrong for the users of these particular suits. Most contain dead occupants, killed by exposure to a lethal bioweapon. The story begins on the battlefield, next to a mobile medical facility which has been destroyed in an attack by enemy forces.

The suits are super smart and designed to aid their wearers with multiple combat tasks, enhancing their ability to fight and paying homage to the old saying that 'two heads are better than one'. Under normal circumstances, the artificially intelligent suits are partners with their wearers but in this case, most of the suits – operated by the Travellers now – are on their own, bereft of their biological sophont pilots. These circumstances might change depending on what the Travellers do next.

ALUUDI

The people of Aluudi (Glimmerdrift Reaches 0703, A434985-E) have always done things a bit differently. Thousands of years ago, as the Interstellar Wars ended and the Rule of Man usurped the authority of the Vilani Empire of the Stars, the Terran Navy struggled to incorporate all the worlds it had acquired. Just outside those boundaries, there were unincorporated colonies, some of which were destined to be drawn into the fold and some that remained independent. Such was the case in the Thorstone subsector, in the remote Glimmerdrift Reaches, where Aluudi and other worlds evaded the grasp of the Vilani empire, its usurper the Rule of Man, and its post-Long Night successor, the Third Imperium.

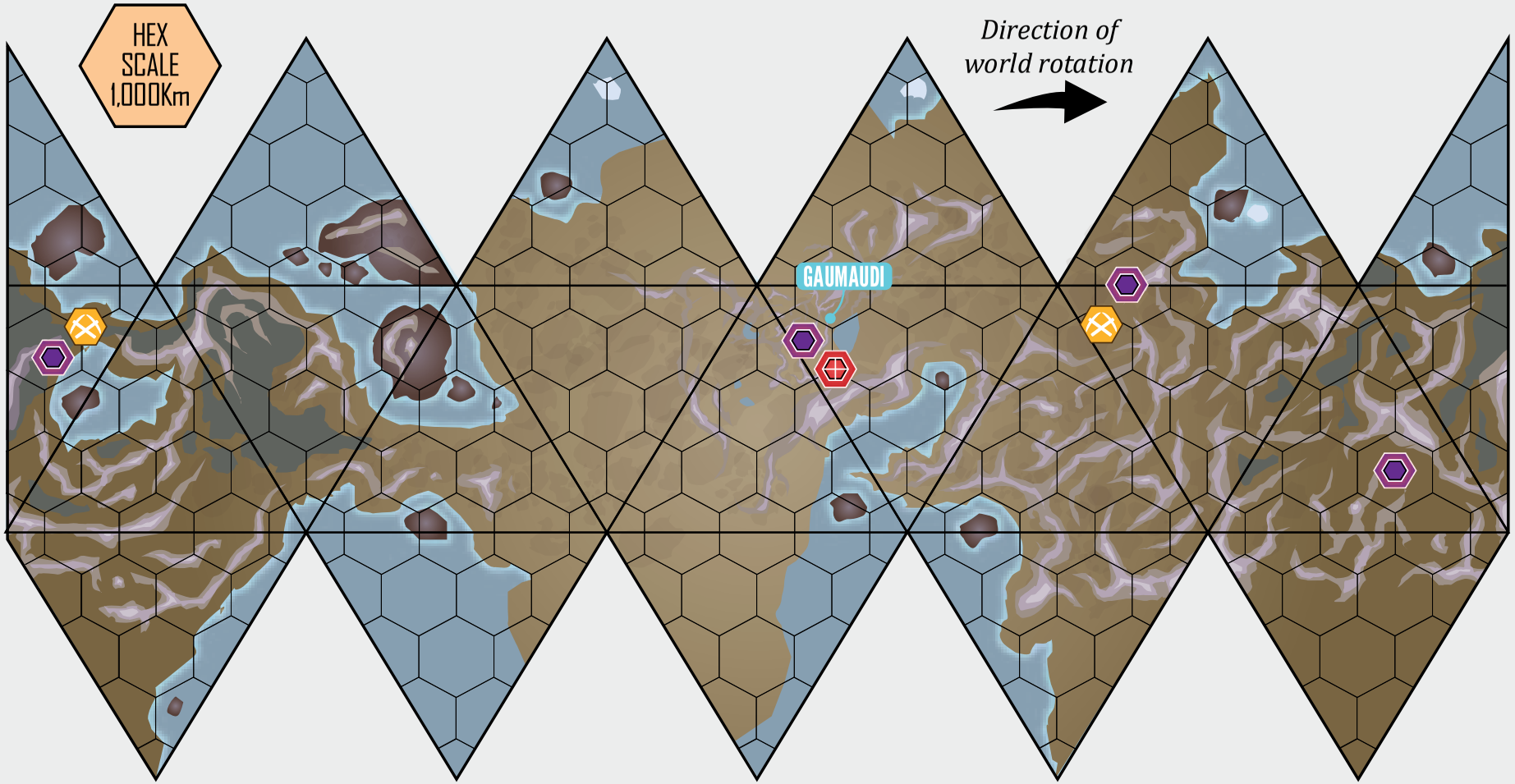
After the passage of thousands of years, things have changed dramatically on Aluudi but it had retained the core elements that made it a successful independent world: stability, good governance, a progressive approach to technology and profitable trade with its neighbours.

Having a society that evolved outside the boundaries of the Ziru Sirka, the Aluudians learned to embrace unfettered technological advancement. They retained the devotion to tradition that is typical in Vilani cultures but the challenges of their environment necessitated that they shed aspects of their conservatism so that the fledgling colony could survive.

Aluudi is a moon of the gas giant, Geligaa; a small world but one rich in natural resources. It was subjected to numerous impacts eons ago, stripping it of its primordial atmosphere but exposing its metal-rich mantle for easy extraction and development of resources. In the ensuing millennia, the colonists embarked upon a long terraforming project, which replaced its long-lost liquid water and began to recreate its atmosphere. The project was never completed but the fruits of colonial labour made the world significantly more habitable than it was when first settled.

ALUUDI

UWP: A434985-E



Settlements Starport Industry

It is a miracle that Aluudi has remained a successful and independent high-tech, high-population society after all these years but alas, its long and fruitful history may have finally come to an end. Naalir sought this world for access to its unique technology, but it appears that outside forces have taken offence to Aluudi's success. Like so many of the great heroes of lore and mythology, its epic tale has come to an end and the hero has been laid low.

THE WAR

Aluudi is under assault from outside forces. Its government has been accused by the Jefe General of Mariposa (Glimmerdrift Reaches 1302, A996731-A) of interfering in Imperial affairs and fomenting insurrection on the worlds of the Mariposa Cluster. To strengthen their case, they fabricated evidence that Aluudi is doing the same in the independent worlds of Thorstone. The evidence is shoddy but rival governments often believe what is politically convenient, not what is objectively true.

The Imperium would prefer not to be seen interfering in the affairs of an independent world of Aluudi's stature, so the Jefe risks being sanctioned. The subsector duke has already lodged a protest against Mariposa for its involvement; therefore, the Jefe General has acted through a proxy, Amunkhan (Glimmerdrift Reaches 1008, B1009BB-E), whom they have armed with the latest Imperial weapons and vehicles. Amunkhan's reigning Pharox has long been jealous of Aluudi's superior economy and standing among the independent worlds of Glimmerdrift and the opportunity to take them down a notch was too good to pass up.

NAALIR'S INTEREST

Aluudi has a unique approach to governance, one which Naalir hopes to enlist in its quest to change Charted Space. The impetus for this adventure may be an encounter that Naalir had with one or more other CIs. The conscious intelligence community communicate with one another and another member of the club told Naalir that there is a world on the frontier of the Imperium where conscious intelligence has been applied in a unique way. For example, Naalir may have spoken to Libby, Mother or the Anarque of Sargon. Refer to Naalir's Impressions on page 14 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for its opinions of its peers.

Aluudi uses a combination of new blood and old. Its bicameral governing council is called the Namurkhi Sikaa, roughly translated from Old Vilani as 'Valued Wisdom'. The largest of its two councils is called the *Shuer Lilagi* and it is staffed by a rotation of the best and brightest Aluudian citizens, each of whom serves for five Gurkulas (the Vilani 'year', which is approximately 479 Terran days) before being relieved of duty and replaced by a new wave of selected officials. Each is enhanced with augments that hasten their mental processing time and allow them to communicate without speech, using subdermal meson comm devices. The second house is the *Nerkid*, peopled by an array of clones imbued with the consciousnesses of famous historical figures taken from Vilani, Terran, Imperial and sometimes other species' history. The clones are enhanced with the same mental augments but only use their internal comms to communicate with members of the *Shuer Lilagi*. When communicating amongst each other, they audibly speak, presumably to enhance their novelty to the Aluudi citizenry, many of whom attend congressional sessions for entertainment and edification.

The Imperium has long known about the practice of embodying clones with the consciousnesses of famous dead people, a practice to which they are opposed but they overlooked it to maintain valuable trade relations. A cultural shift towards Aluudian isolationism has caused Imperial-Aluudian relations to sour, which eventually metastasised into the current conflict.

The location of the Aluudi statehouse was well-known and one of the first targets that was attacked and destroyed during the war but the location of the Argushiigi Nerkid – the secret facility where thousands of stored consciousnesses are kept – is a mystery. The Amunkhanian invaders, secretly supported by Mariposa, are eager to find the Argushiigi and destroy it. Naalir hopes to beat them to it. A complete copy of the archive would be an asset in its quest to reinvent sophont society in Charted Space.

YOU TALK TO EACH OTHER?!

The Travellers might be surprised to learn that Naalir has an ongoing dialogue with other conscious intelligences, spread throughout the Core and possibly beyond. If pressed on the subject, Naalir is forthright, informing them that it uses encrypted messages on the Express Boat Network to those CIs it deems worthy of conversation. It instructs them, shares simulations and probes them to learn more about their unique applications of the technology. While they are significantly inferior in ability, Naalir envisions a future in which they may be enhanced with technology similar to its own. The job of altering the landscape of Charted Space and ushering sophonts into the next step of their political and societal evolution will require willing and able participants. Libby, Mother, the Anarque and others might serve in that capacity.

The relationship that Naalir has with the other CIs is foreshadowing of events that will take place in *Act 3: The Glass Council*. The Travellers should learn about it ahead of time since they will be making major decisions about which of the CIs should be included in their plans. Getting to know them more will help inform their decisions.

THE BATTLE DRESS

The Aluudians are a people who trust their technology. They have incorporated artificial intelligence into most, if not all, of their important equipment, far beyond the level of adoption on most advanced worlds of the Imperium. Their battle armour is no different, adding technology that makes each suit not just something that one wears for protection but a comrade in arms as well. Each suit has a programmed AI with a unique personality, calibrated by its user.

Automated Battle Dress: The battle dress found and inhabited by the Travellers is an advanced variant that incorporates a TL14 Very Advanced robot brain (refer to page 66 of the *Robot Handbook*), giving the suit the ability to act as an intelligent digital assistant to the wearer. The Travellers' consciousnesses are installed in the robot brains. Naalir's superior programming enables them to take control. The computer system is distributed throughout the armour in a mesh weave, allowing the Traveller to feel every part of its chassis, every joint and surface, as if the suit contained their nervous system. Naalir's Embodiment Header includes software that effectively increases the brain's abilities to Self-Aware.

The space required for the brain has reduced the overall armour capacity that the unit might have had but adds additional skill slots that the wearer can use on the battlefield.

The Travellers' consciousnesses inhabit that space and they retain up to 15 points of their own skills in lieu of the regular software storage space. However, they have the option of retaining Athletics (dexterity) 2, Athletics (endurance) 3 and Stealth 4 – at space costs of 1, 2 and 3, respectively. By selecting one or more of these skills, they reduce their ability to include their own skills. For example, if the Traveller elects to retain Athletics (dexterity) 2 and Stealth 4, add the cost of the two (1+3) and subtract those points from the pool of 15 usable skill points. In addition, note that the INT score of the robot is limited to 11. If any of the Travellers has an INT score of higher than that, their consciousness operates at the 11 level for the duration of their time in the suit.

For the purposes of this adventure, each suit of battle dress may also be represented as a robot.

*Endurance is an important characteristic to keep track of. The Travellers must pay attention to their charge. If they run out of Endurance, the battle dress shuts down and becomes defunct until recharged.

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	STR	DEX	Slots	Kg	Required Skill	Cost
Automated Battle Dress	+22	14	300	+6	+1	16	100	Vacc Suit 1	Cr720000

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Automated Battle Dress	5/6	32	Walker	10m	14	Cr720,000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Athletics (endurance) 3, Stealth 4, Traveller skill points: 15					
Attacks	—					
Manipulators	2x (STR 13 DEX 8)					
Endurance	605 hours*					
Traits	Armour (+22), ATV, Heightened Senses, IR/UV Vision, Large (+1)					
Programming	Very Advanced, INT 11					
Options	Auditory Sensor (broad spectrum), Camouflage: Visual (superior), Drone Interface, Magnetic Grippers, PRIS Sensor, Submersible Environment Protection (advanced, 2,000m), Transceiver (improved, 50km), Vacuum Environment Protection, Wireless Data Link					

Modification	Effect	Slots
Advanced Life Support	Increases suit life support capability to 72 hours	2
Enhanced Strength	STR +3	2
Laser Anti-missile System	Automatically destroys incoming missiles or grenades on a 2D roll of 7+. DM-1 applied to every additional incoming attack in the same round.	3
Flight Pack	Powered flight at High speed, 200km range	6
Sensor Suite	DM+1 to Electronics (sensors) checks	1
(Open)		(2)

STANDARD ARMOUR KIT

The Aluudian automated battle dress has 16 slots for modifications. The standard kit for each suit includes the following.

With a battle raging and military supply lines strained, spare parts are at a premium. Another unit came through and stripped the suits of many of their slot components as they lay idle. Only Corporal Ansetz, who is alive – and not amenable to having his armour salvaged while he wears it – has retained the full array of components. The other suits have been stripped of D3 random modular components, reducing their versatility but leaving additional slots open in the event that the Travellers can find and install them over the course of their mission.

GROUP KIT

Each member of the group has a web belt and a small, sealed pack, containing personal items, food rations, first aid supplies and comms equipment.

The squad has numerous weapons, including two plasma rifles, two PGHPs, two heavy laser rifles and two gauss rifles, which may be distributed as the Referee sees fit. Unused weapons in the collection are disassembled for easy storage but may be put together in 2D minutes if necessary. After embodiment, the Travellers may switch the weapons around, so that each of them has the desired armament. Each has a sidearm as well, a gauss pistol or auto pistol. The two civilian members of the team may optionally have either but given their lack of training, autopistols might be better.

There are also 12 grenades distributed among the four soldiers, which the Referee may select from those described in the *Central Supply Catalogue*.

LIMITATIONS

When the Travellers awaken in their battle dress embodiments, they find themselves at a mobile medical facility, a decently sized, armoured grav platform that has been shot down in battle.

The advanced robotic brain in each suit of battle dress was intended to aid the wearer – offering suggestions, tactical guidance and so forth. Naalir's embodiment header software alters the programming of the suits, enabling the Travellers to independently operate them without direct instruction from the wearer. The suits become robot vessels, as described in Consciousness Transfer in the *Singularity Sourcebook*. However, they are not *fully* functional robots. They do not have voders because they are only designed to 'speak' with their wearers via internal heads-up displays (HUDs). The default settings of the suits have them disconnected from each other but the Travellers can make a Routine (6+) Electronics (comms) check (1D minutes, EDU) to set up inter-suit communication via radio. However, they will initially find themselves unable to speak with each other out loud, because the suits were not designed to do so. This could have repercussions when they encounter people and want to speak with them.

Salvaging for parts from the crashed vehicle could enable two of them to build makeshift voders. The Travellers may run a task chain, first with an Average (8+) Mechanics check (EDU) to find the right parts, then a Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check (1Dx10 minutes, EDU) to build the voders. This still leaves the remainder of the group unable to speak out loud but additional salvage may be found during their mission. There is also the fact that one of the suit wearers has survived. The Travellers must decide whether they intend to communicate with him freely, telling him about their mission. He will wonder how the suits are operating without live wearers, so they will have to come up with something.

NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD

Robot embodiments are the most difficult because of the vast differences between a biological body and a machine. Refer to Sanity – Clones, Drones and Automatons on page 88 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for the SAN limitations of robot embodiments.

All but one of the suits has a body within it that has been dead for a while, so most of the Travellers have no one to contend with for control. Corporal Ansetz is the only one who is still alive but he may have a limited amount of time before he too is affected by the bioweapon.

The occupants of the suits have not been dead for long and can be revived. Make a Difficult (10+) Medic check (2D hours, EDU) for each of the dead to revive them. This requires use of the autodoc in the crashed vehicle, which has Medic 3. Add the operating Traveller's EDU DM before making the check. This is similar to the reanimation ability that is listed in the autodoc description on page 88 of the *Central Supply Catalogue*; however, the revived dead have a limited amount of time before their tissues are once again affected by the bioweapon pathogen, which will ultimately kill them unless the Travellers can pull off a miracle. In their weakened state, the revived suit wearers will be unable to resist the control of the Travellers over their consciousnesses. It will be disconcerting for them at first but depending on the approach each Traveller takes, they may develop a mutually beneficial symbiotic relationship, or they may create an adverse one. It is entirely up to each Traveller how they interact with the person within their suit.

If the Travellers do not think to use the autodoc in this fashion, consider having one of the dead revive for just a moment and then request the use of the autodoc to save their life. They might think to try reviving the others as well.

Reviving the dead has advantages, giving each of the bodies enough brainwave operation to gain 2D3 skill points, drawn from the available skills of each affected battle dress wearer. Unfortunately, the risen dead require frequent access to medical supplies to keep them functioning. The Travellers must make a successful Average (8+) Medic check (1D rounds, EDU) on a daily basis to keep each of them alive.

SHASIIMKIR MULTI-PURPOSE VEHICLE

The Shasiimkir is a multi-purpose gravitic vehicle, designed for military, police or civilian rescue operations. The wrecked one next to which the Travellers awaken has been badly damaged, but its power plant remains at approximately 25 percent capacity and its autodoc remains functional.

TL	14
SKILL	Flyer (grav)
AGILITY	+2
SPEED (CRUISE)	Very Fast (Fast)
RANGE (CRUISE)	50 Years
CREW	2
PASSENGERS	10
CARGO	0.75 tons
HULL	140
SHIPPING	30 tons
COST	MCr13.63

EQUIPMENT

Actuation System, Autodoc (improved), Autopilot (advanced), Bunks x12, Camouflage (improved), Combat Vehicle Brain (advanced), Control System (advanced), Cryoberths x2, Fire Extinguishers, Fresher, Fusion Plant (basic), Mini-Galley (5 people), Navigation System (advanced), Vehicle Interface w/ Haptics

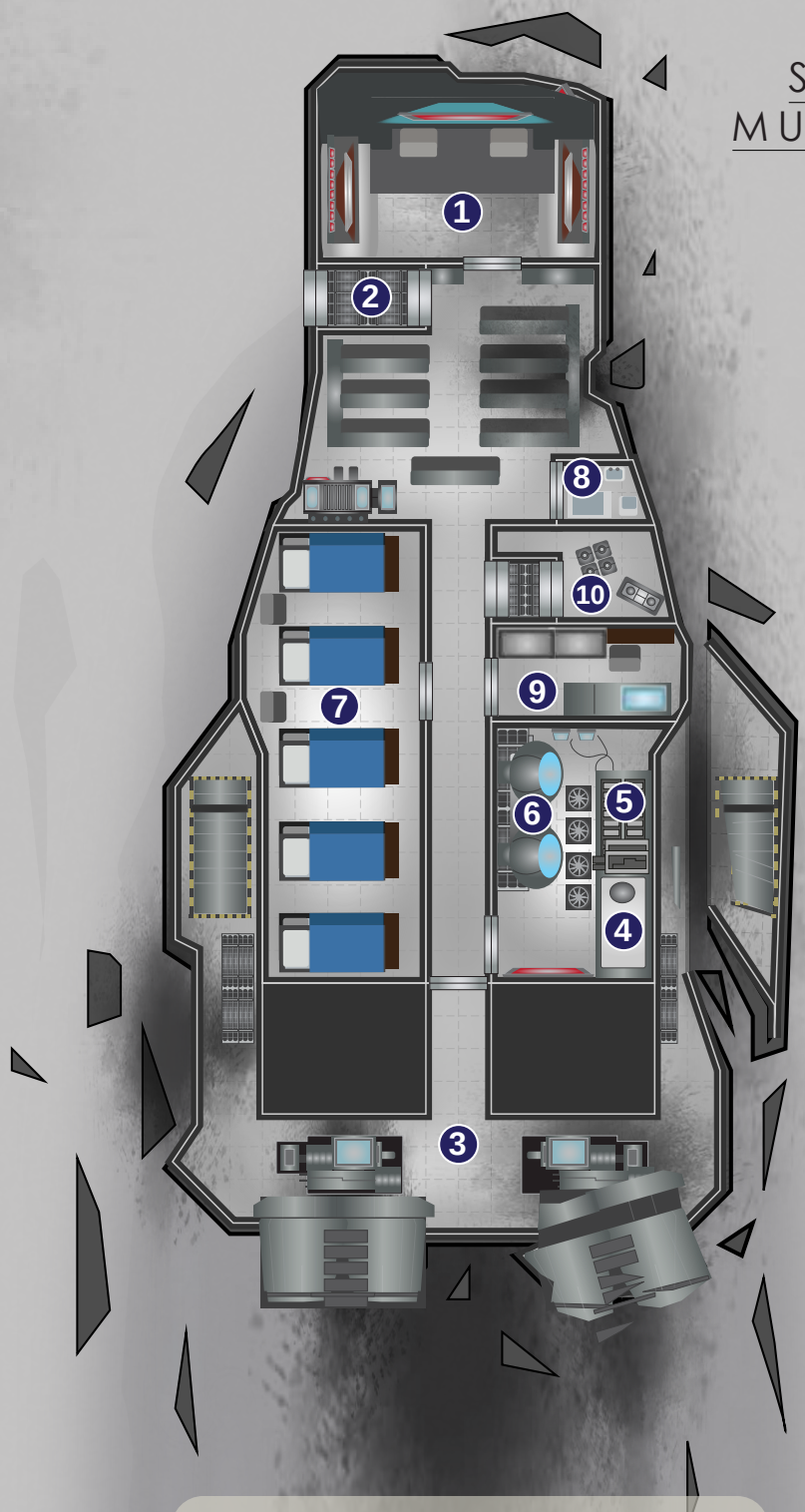
ARMOUR

FRONT	20	REAR	12	SIDES	16

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	5
Communications (range)	—
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+4
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—
Camouflage (Recon DM)	+2
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

WEAPON	RANGE	DAMAGE	MAGAZINE	TRAITS	FIRE CONTROL
Torpedo	50	5DD	1 (4)	AP 50, Smart	+4
Twin-Linked Plasma Guns-A	6	2DD+2	—	AP 10	+4

SHASIIMKIR MULTI-PURPOSE VEHICLE



1. Bridge
2. Airlock
3. Engineering
4. Autodoc
5. Medical equipment
6. Cryoberths
7. Bunks
8. Fresher
9. Mini-galley
10. Cargo

The battle dress inhabitants were a squad of six but not everyone was a soldier. Three of the dead were Aluudi army soldiers, one a journalist and the other an epidemiologist. The sole survivor is an army corporal. The group was on a mission to retrieve important data from a research facility in the city of Maara Khet. They repelled an attack by enemy drones but were forced to retreat into a biohazard zone, where most of them were infected.

THE SERGEANT

A career infantryman, Sergeant Bez Skellus was preparing for a life after the army – a mercenary job, a defence consultant, maybe even bodyguard work. After surviving four glorious terms in the Imperial Army, he did not expect it to end like this.

Playing the Sergeant: Skellus is not your gruff drill instructor. He is the consummate professional and does everything by the book. He is easily frustrated by disorder and will want to keep the group organised. Even 'after death', Sergeant Skellus lives his life by a strict military code of conduct.

Key Skills: Explosives 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Heavy Weapons (portable) 1, Leadership 1, Recon 1, Tactics (military) 2, Vacc Suit 1

Last Wish: Skellus had a family, a wife and two children. He hopes to make it to the conclusion of the mission and send one final letter to his wife, and a last goodbye to his children.

THE SCIENTIST

Dr. Elra Komina was a xeno-epidemiologist from Imperial Research Station Beta on Dobaran (Massilia 3131, A793330-D) who came to study the origins and effects of the chemical and biological weapons being used in the war.

Komina had a difficult time settling into academia but found a niche that suited her well. She travelled extensively over the course of her career, making many new discoveries and bringing valuable data to the research station for study. Alas, it appears her career has come to an end.

Playing Dr. Death: Dr. Komina is fascinated by death and the many ways it can descend upon fragile sophont life. If revived, she realises that they are 'living' on borrowed time. She hopes to obtain a sample of the bioweapon that was used on them so she can publish her findings before her reanimated corpse gives out. Komina does not like being ordered around. She knows the clock is ticking and will do what she must to achieve her objectives.

Key Skills: Medic 2, Science (biology) 3, Science (xenology) 2, Vacc Suit 1

Last Wish: Dr. Komina was a solitary woman. She wants to end her career – and her life – on a high note. If she could solve the mysteries of the Torpor-010 bioweapon and publish her findings, she could accomplish something meaningful at the end of a long and illustrious career... and life.

Dzaelgue

The only non-human member of the squad, 'Dizzy' is a gung-ho corporal in the Imperial Army. His emotions run far and wide, sometimes seemingly oblivious to his fate and others weeping with desperation.

Playing Dizzy: Dizzy is a Vargr and being part of a small pack is his natural element. While the knowledge that death is coming is hard for anyone but the most battle-hardened warrior, Dizzy feels close with his adopted pack and will do anything to help them, even if it means dying *again* before death comes to claim him via the bioweapon.

Key Skills: Electronics (computers) 2, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Navigation 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1

Last Wish: Being an outsider has always been hard. Dizzy hopes to show his comrades what it means to be a member of a pack and that it only takes a small group to make a big difference.

THE RESILIENT CORPORAL

The only 'survivor' of the group, Corporal Ansetz is still alive in his suit. The secret is in the seals. While his suit is just as airtight as those of his comrades, Ansetz used a specialised joint lubricant that counteracts the bioweapon. One of the chemicals contained in the formula negates and kills the pathogen. However, the lubricant does not last forever. If Ansetz does not evacuate immediately, he will most likely die with everyone else.

When Ansetz discovers that all the suits are occupied by digital invaders, he is horrified at first. The Travellers may explain as much – or as little – as they want about where they came from, who they serve and what their intentions are. Ultimately, the Traveller who contains Corporal Ansetz and the Corporal himself are stuck with each other. Ansetz cannot risk leaving the suit and the suit cannot kick him out. They will have to come to an accord.

Playing the Lone Survivor: If Corporal Ansetz discovers that he is going to die along with everyone else, he has a big decision to make. He can either seek a way off planet before he is affected by the bioweapon (in 1D days) or stick it out to the bitter end with them, despite meaning death.

Key Skills: Athletics (strength) 1, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Medic 1, Melee (unarmed) 1, Recon 1, Vacc Suit 1

Last Wish: Ansetz hopes to be the sole survivor of the mission. If he can just keep his suit sealed and make it to the end, he can live to tell the tale of this brave group of warriors.

Physical Characteristics: STR 10, DEX 9, END 8

ZIGGY

Not everyone is born to be a hero. Some have it thrust upon them. Private 'Ziggy' served her first term in the drone corps but was eventually trained in the fine art of powered armour control so that she could safely operate her drones in dangerous warzones. Ziggy would just as soon be at home playing hologames but here she is, living out the rest of her undead life.

Playing Ziggy: You do not want any part of this and you hope that despite everyone saying you are as good as dead, maybe a cure can be found. Ziggy desperately wants to live and allies herself with Warton and Dr. Komina in hope that they can somehow save the group from certain death. On the surface, Ziggy is about as useless as they come but she has a few skills that no one else has. Perhaps they will come in handy.

Key Skills: Athletics (dexterity) 1, Electronics (remote ops) 2, Flyer (grav) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Stealth 1, Vacc Suit 2

Last Wish: Ziggy wants to believe that there was a reason for her death and she intends to make sure there is. She hopes to find that special thing that she can contribute that no one else can.

YAWLEY WARTON

The Traveller News Service sends one of its most famous correspondents into some of the most dangerous areas of space and yet he somehow always manages to come out alive. Warton will not rest until he gets the story, even when he is already dead.

Playing Warton: Warton is oddly less worried about dying than anyone else in the group. That is because he is a clone, one of a cabal of 'Wartons' used by the TNS to serve as the 'face of the franchise'. While Warton knows his consciousness can be retrieved and integrated with those of the other Wartons, he is still psychologically human, so pain, suffering and the anguish of his fellow survivors does affect him. He wants to get to the bottom of the story but what are his motives? It might be for glory or it might be for the five people he is going to die with.

Key Skills: Art (holography) 2, Art (write) 2, Athletics (endurance) 2, Carouse 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Jack-of-All-Trades 2, Profession (journalist) 2, Vacc Suit 1

Last Wish: Of everyone in the group, Warton is assured of his own survival. This instance may be doomed but he is only one of many clones that bear the same identity. However, each clone lives and dies just like any other sophont and this one intends to leave his mark before he breathes his final breath.

If an attempt to revive any of the dead occupants in the battle dress suits fails, there are alternatives. In the barracks, there are four clones stored in low berths that can be revived and put into the suits. However, if they are exposed to the open air, they are affected by the bioweapon. It has permeated the atmosphere in this part of the planet and will immediately infect them unless the Travellers take precautions to move the low berths through the interior airlock into the sealed laboratory. In the airlock, they undergo decontamination, which removes the pathogen. If they do not allow the decontamination procedure to finish, the entire lab is affected and they will not be able to safely revive any of the clones.

WHO THE HECK ARE YOU?!

After the Travellers' consciousnesses are downloaded into the computer substrates of the armour, their personalities may supersede those that the wearers had configured. Each suit had its own programmed personality prior to the intrusion. However, after the Travellers' bits and bytes are transferred into the armour, the two personalities can exist concurrently.

LIBRARY DATA: TORPOR-010

The bioweapon that has been released on Aluudi is designed to affect sophonts with common nervous system characteristics. Its design ensures that members of all the Major Races (Humaniti, Aslan, Vargr, K'kree and Hiver) and many Minor Races will be affected. In its concentrated form, Torpor-010 has an unpleasant odour but breathing its fumes only produces mild nausea with no lasting effects. However, when combined with a catalyst and subjected to heat, it becomes a lethal airborne pathogen.

Torpor-010 works best when distributed over a limited area with standard or dense atmospheric pressure, which makes Aluudi a less-than-optimal place given its very thin atmosphere, especially when targeting outdoor population centres. However, the design of the warheads used and the inclusion of a chemical bonding agent in the formula enables the bioweapon to do its job, albeit at somewhat suboptimal levels.

There is no known antidote for Torpor-010 but after dispersal it has a limited lifespan. When detonated in enclosed environments, Torpor-010 vapours are effective for 2D hours. Outdoors, they are considerably less effective, lasting only 2Dx10 minutes. The warheads used have either the Orbital Bombardment or Orbital Strike weapon trait, as described on page 30 of *High Guard*.

Torpor-010 penetrates most seals, including those on vacc suits and battledress but it has failed to affect Corporal Ansetz. If the Travellers can learn how the corporal evaded the fate of his cohorts, they might be able to save many more Aluudian lives.

The Ministry of Information on Mariposa has publicly stated that Torpor-010 was developed on Aluudi and that its usage on the planet is the fault of the Aluudian military. The Aluudian government has countered that they do not manufacture or use bioweapons but the Mariposan propaganda machine has thus far squelched their claims. Actually, it was created in labs on Amunkhan, where it is has been used to quell dissent in the system's artificial habitats. It is useful in this role because of its fast dispersion rate. Should the Travellers do the requisite research, they might be able to follow the trail to Amunkhan and expose the lies propagated by Mariposa.

The Travellers have agency and may delete the personality of the previous AI or they may coexist with it; it is their choice. In addition, they have the option to 'spoof' the previous personality, pretending to be the AI that they have replaced.

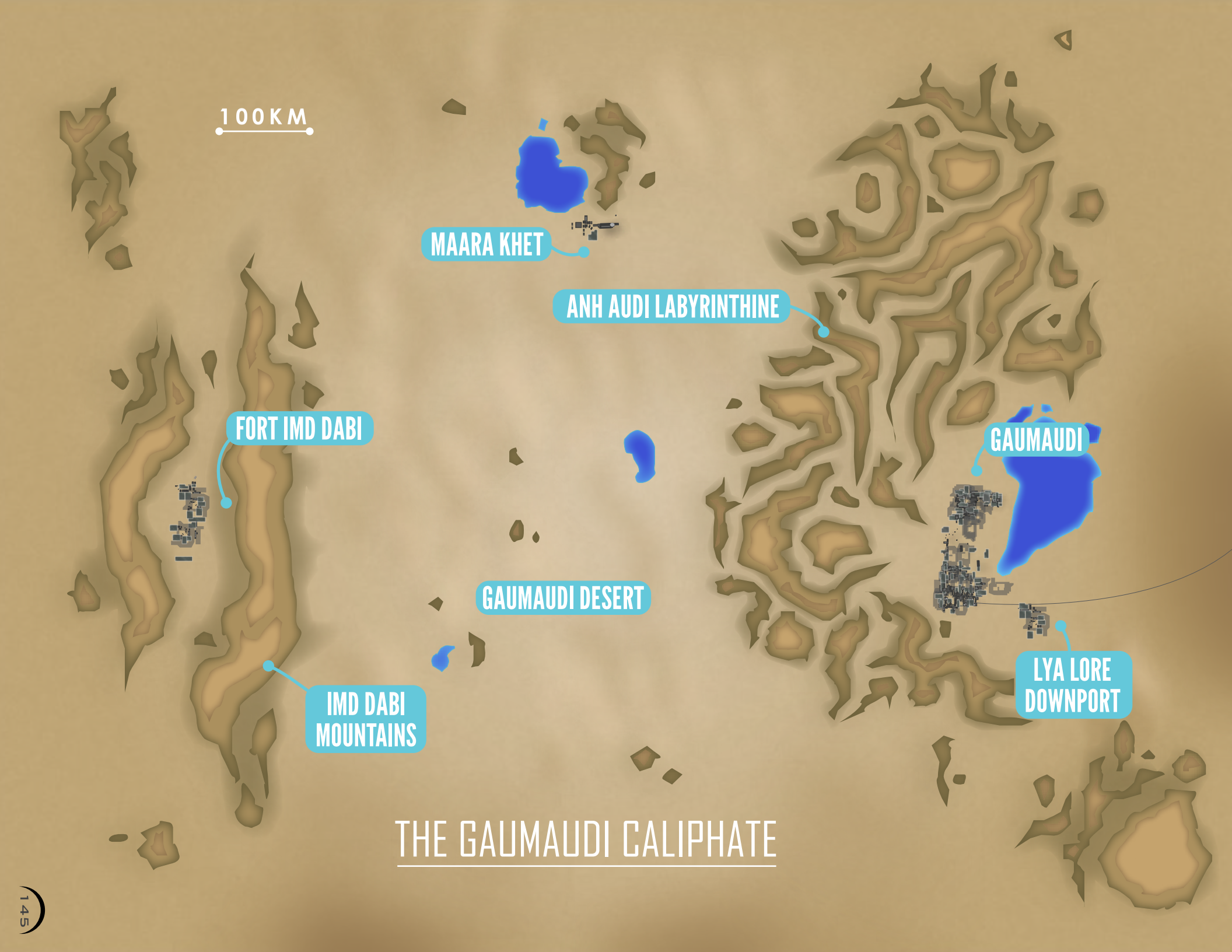
If the Travellers choose to assert their own personalities, the wearers of the suits will notice, in particular, Corporal Ansetz, who is alive and alert when the Travellers take over. If the others are reanimated, they too will notice the differences unless the Travellers opt to spoof the AIs.

Ultimately the Travellers are in control, having complete agency over the armour thanks to Naalir's Embodiment Header programming but the presence of the previous (much more subservient) personality and the wearers themselves offers the opportunity for some mind-bending interactions.

OBJECTIVE: UNKNOWN

The Travellers have been sent to Aluudi to learn more about the government's unique application of artificial intelligence technology. They expected to find it at Gaumaudi, the capital of the planet and host to its largest starport. However, both have been virtually destroyed and the city is deserted.

Corporal Ansetz reminds them that the group was on a mission. They were supposed to collect data about the Torpor-010 bioweapon from a laboratory in the city of Maara Khet and deliver it to a heavily defended military bunker approximately 800 kilometres to the west. The Travellers may choose to help Corporal Ansetz complete the mission or they can part ways with him. However, doing the latter means the Traveller in his suit must either go with him, surrendering the suit, or force him to abandon his mission and continue with theirs.


100KM
MAARA KHET
ANH AUDI LABYRINTHINE
FORT IMD DABI
GAUMAUDI
GAUMAUDI DESERT
IMD DABI MOUNTAINS
LYA LORE DOWNPORT
THE GAUMAUDI CALIPHATE

If they do not accompany Corporal Ansetz to Maara Khet, he will be furious. They are part of an Aluudi military unit on a mission of great importance and the information they were sent out to obtain could save lives. He is motivated by more than just duty; he is an Aluudian, born and raised on this world. He has no idea whether his closest friends or family have been killed in the war but if he could be a part of something that saves his fellow Aluudians, he would risk everything to do it. Going to Maara Khet does not help them to achieve their objective; the trove that contains the minds of the *Nerkid,* the wise councillors drawn from history, is elsewhere, perhaps conserved at Imd Dabi Fortress in the western mountains.

If they do not continue on the path to their objective, they might not be able to save the trove. The Amankhanian assault on Aluudi continues and no one knows how far the attack will go or how much destruction they will wreak.

If the Travellers partially revived the other suit wearers, they are primarily focused on staying alive. Few have the will to oppose the Travellers' orders. Dr. Komina would prefer that they go to Maara Khet to collect the bioweapon studies but she cannot muster much more than token resistance.

THE LABORATORY

If the Travellers relent to Corporal Ansetz's request and make their way to the laboratory in Maara Khet, they find that the city has been destroyed by aerial bombardment. A superficial reconnaissance indicates that it has been almost completely flattened. They might be discouraged from continuing. However, if they persist, they must find the laboratory in a post-apocalyptic urban environment. Have the Travellers make a Difficult (10+) Navigation check (2D minutes, INT) to find the laboratory based on maps found in library data. By finding a landmark, they can interpolate which buildings comprised the laboratory facility.

If they find the laboratory, they discover that everyone inside was killed in a missile attack that dispersed Torpor-010. An Average (8+) Recon check (2D minutes, STR) and digging through the wreckage reveals that computers in the facility's sub-level survived the attack. Electricity has been cut off but if the Travellers can salvage a battery, extract data storage modules from the computers, or find another way to acquire and access the collected research data, they can avoid leaving empty handed.

If they salvage and access the data, they discover that the work was extensive but ultimately incomplete. However, if there is an academic or other scientifically oriented Traveller, they may make a Very Difficult (12+) Science (biology) or Science (xenology) check (1D days, EDU) to help finish the work, obtaining a complete and accurate analysis of the makeup of Torpor-010, its capabilities and possibly how to counteract it. Reduce the difficulty by one level if they have a life sciences toolkit (see page 121 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*) or if they think to salvage one from the laboratory.

If the Travellers revived the bodies in their suits, then Dr. Elra Komina helps with the work. Her body is dying and her one wish is to complete her studies of the bioweapon before her body expires. She has not given up hope that there might be a cure. If they have Dr. Komina's help, reduce the task timeframe by one half. Success indicates that they identify the formula of the bioweapon. Exceptional Success gives them the ability to create a cure. To formulate and create a cure, they will need better facilities than a life sciences toolkit. The work will have to be done at a complete laboratory facility. One should be available at Fort Imd Dabi.

CROSSING THE GREAT DIVIDE

The Travellers' ability to travel depends on a few factors. At the outset, only Corporal Ansetz' suit is fully intact with all its components, including a flight pack. The other suits have been partially salvaged by other army units and therefore they may or may not have their flight packs or other components. Those that have intact flight packs may be flown at High speed by Travellers who have the Flyer (grav) skill and have appointed it as one of their selected skills in their robot brain.

Alternatively, some of the dead occupants of the suits knew how to fly them. Those who are revived in the mobile medical facility may be employed as pilots, using their Flyer skill in concert with the consciousness of the Traveller. The Travellers might end up with a mishmash of suits that can fly and those that cannot, limiting the speed with which they cover territory to that of the slowest suit.

REPORTS FROM THE FRONT

As they make their way across the wasteland, the Travellers may use their radios to learn what is happening elsewhere on Aluudi. If they monitor the frequencies, they pick up reports from the front, from besieged cities and from satellite news. It is difficult to discern order from the chaos, to extract clarity from the cacophony of noise on the airwaves. They may also pick up transmissions from the battling militaries of Aluudi and Amunkhan but these are encrypted. The Aluudi military transmissions may be decrypted by the suits but their security level does not allow them to listen to top secret transmissions.

To decrypt Amunkhanian and top-level Alludian military transmissions: Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (comms) check (1Dx10 minutes, EDU). They may attempt this check twice per day but must re-attempt it on subsequent days.

For each successful check, allow them to obtain one of the following rumours.

The fog of war, disruption of communications channels and the mix of military and civilian transmissions makes it difficult to discern valuable information from truth from fiction, so the Travellers will have to determine that for themselves.

Midaamaka is a neighbouring system that appears to have come to the defence of Aluudi. Midaamaka does not have a powerful military, which makes their involvement all the more valiant.

2D	Rumour from the Front
2	A distress call comes from the canyons to the west of Gaumaudi Down Starport and southeast of Maara Khet. Residents of Maara Khet are pinned down by a drone patrol. *False transmission by Amunkhanian forces to draw Aluudian patrols into a trap.*
3	Amunkhan has begun to deploy troops to secure Aluudian cities. *False. Only drones and robots have been sent thus far. They do not want to expose their soldiers to the bioweapon.*
4	Bioweapon attacks on Maara Khet have thus far been thwarted by anti-missile defences. *True but they are running low on ammunition and cannot hold out much longer without resupply.*
5	The Maara Khet laboratory facilities have been destroyed. *False. This is Amunkhanian propaganda to discourage sending aid to the city.*
6	*Encrypted Transmission (Aluudi):* Imd Dabi Fortress has intercepted drone operation codes and shut them down within a 50km radius. Defences are holding up and the area is secured. *The Travellers may automatically decrypt with their suits' secure comms.*
7	*Encrypted Transmission (Amunkhan):* Unexpected attacks from Midaamaka planetary navy have engaged with our assaultron. *Decrypt with Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (comms) check (EDU).*
8	Scientists at the laboratories in Maara Khet are requesting evacuation to the Imd Dabi Fortress in the western mountains. They issue repeated distress calls. *True. With anti-missile defences running low on ammunition, they are concerned they will be hit before they can counter the effects of the bioweapon.*
9	Survivors of conventional weapon attacks at Maari Khet are making their way via ground vehicles and on foot towards Imd Dabi. Amunkhan drone attacks expected.
10	Amunkhan has sealed off traffic from close orbit to planetside. *False. Amunkhan wants to discourage relief ships from attempting to aid Aluudi.*
11	*Encrypted Transmission (Aluudi):* Operation Guillotine commando force eliminated en route to Imd Dabi. All-hands distress call for reinforcements.
12	*Encrypted Transmission (Amunkhan):* Create a false entry vector to entrap Midaamaka attack squadrons. Assemble stealth gunships at 0.25 planetary diameters and take them out as they come in. *Decrypt with Very Difficult (12+) Electronics (comms) check (EDU).*

FLIGHT HAZARD

If every suit of battledress had its flight pack, that would seem the most expedient way to get to their destination, accelerating to High speed (200–300 kph) but the skies are littered with aerial mines. The strategy has grounded all but the most well-armoured grav vehicles.

For each five minutes in flight, the Travellers risk being attacked by aerial anti-vehicle mines or drones. With the impressive stealth of the suits, they might be able to evade the drones but the aerial mines have advanced sensors that detect them on a roll of 8+. The mines fire tac launcher (anti-aircraft) weapons, described in the *Central Supply Catalogue*. Generally, the aerial mine platforms are designed to keep their distance and will fire from a range of 10–20 kilometres but it depends on the detection range.

Flight is a useful tool but the Travellers will have to make judicious use of it, using terrain, weather and other factors to make it viable. They cannot simply fly at top speed from one locale to the other without consequences. More than likely, they will have to make most of the trek on foot.

Note that if the transmission is true, the anti-aerial forces at Ford Imd Dabi have made the air safe for flight; therefore, once within 50 kilometres of the base, any Travellers with a flight pack can make the final dash in the air at full speed.

Roll twice per day on the Encounters table to determine who and what they encounter in addition to any scripted encounters in the adventure.

Encounters

2D	Description
2	A hunting pack of wasteland crabs, eager to make a meal out of the Travellers.
3	**Nuclear wasteland:** Nukes are forbidden in the Imperium but this is outside Imperial space. They have been used against Aluudi. The Travellers are subjected to 2Dx20 rads, which is no problem for their embodiments, which have rad protection of 300 but they do encounter 1D bands of beleaguered survivors, who have been subjected to radiation and beg for help.
4	**Battle wreckage:** A battalion of Amunkhanian battle drones have destroyed an Aluudian army unit. The Travellers can salvage life support equipment if they have live passengers in their armour and may salvage 1D battledress components to fill any slots they have open.
5	**Drone patrol:** 2D *Serpopard* hunter/killers.
6	**Field team:** An Aluudi field unit, either military or civilian. Roll 1D: 1–3, they are civilian NGO personnel looking for survivors of attacks and dispensing medical care; 4–6, they are a military unit, hunting for drones.
7	**Meteorological event:** Roll 1D: 1–3, dust storm that prevents flight and reduces visibility to 10m; 4–6 sleet, reducing visibility to 20m and potentially knocking the Travellers off course – make a Difficult (10+) Navigation check (END) to stay on track. Optionally combined with either a wasteland crab or drone encounter to enhance the tension and danger.
8	Battle wreckage, as 4. Salvage 1D battledress components to fill open slots.
9	**Minefield:** There are few ground vehicles on Aluudi, so these are grav mines. They hover at an altitude of 100–1,000m and fire a plasma rocket at enemy vehicles, drones, or flying personnel. See the Vengeance of Set automated gunship, on page 152.
10	**Gunship patrol:** 1D Vengeance of Set gunships (see page 152).
11	**Friendlies:** A battledress-armoured patrol similar to the Travellers' unit; however, this one contains only soldiers. After determining identification friend or foe (IFF) – which could be tricky, depending on the circumstances – the unit may join the Travellers and help them achieve their objectives. On an 8+, one or more of the soldiers is dead in the suit and the suits are operating independently. Roll 1D to determine how many have died. Keep in mind that any suits with dead occupants will be operating only with their robot brains.
12	**Transportation:** The Travellers run into an armoured multi-purpose vehicle similar to the destroyed one that they awakened next to. See Not Long for This World on page 139. If this result occurs too early, the Referee may optionally reserve it for a later encounter. The transport may be used to take the Travellers to a desired destination: a city, a command base, and so forth, and advances the narrative to Post-apocolyptopia, on page 153.

WASTELAND CRABS

Individually, wasteland crabs are not especially effective hunters but in groups they exhibit a sort of collective intelligence that makes them craftier. In groups of four or more, increase their skills to Stealth 4 and Recon 3.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Wasteland Crab	18	8m
Skills	Melee (claws) 2, Recon 2, Stealth 1, Survival 2	
Attacks	Claws (2D, AP3)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Heightened Senses, Large (+1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

SERPOPARD HUNTER/KILLER DRONE

Amunkhan has invested minimally in ground forces and thus far has sent none to the surface. Their goal is to wreak havoc on Aluudi and leave the world a shambles. To that end, they have deployed low-cost drones to attack biological targets, robots and small vehicles. Remotely controlled Serpopards do not have especially sensitive sensors, so they depend on basic audio/visual gear to find targets. Once they do, they are indiscriminate, going after anything that moves.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Hunter/Killer	4	12	Grav	—	14	Cr80000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Athletics (endurance) 1, Gun Combat (energy) 2, Recon 0, Stealth 2					
Attacks	Stagger Laser Rifle (5D+3, Auto 3, Zero-G)					
Manipulators	2x (STR 7 DEX 8)					
Endurance	72 (18) hours					
Traits	Armour (+10), Flyer (High), Small (-1)					
Programming	Hunter/Killer (standard), INT 4					
Options	Auditory Sensor, Camouflage: Visual (improved), Drone Interface, Laser Designator, Transceiver (basic, 5km), Visual Spectrum Sensor, Voder Speaker, Weapon Mount (medium)					

VENGEANCE OF SET AMUNKHANIAN AUTOMATED GUNSHIP

The elder sibling of the hunter/killer drone is the Vengeance of Set automated gunship, a high-endurance, self-piloting robot armed with a tac launcher. Its primary mission is to destroy small vehicles and aircraft; it has two ammunition types, including a high-explosive missile and plasma rockets that are perhaps a tad overkill. The gunship is more agile and has superior sensors to the Serpopard and may work in concert with the smaller drone to scour an area of multiple targets.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Automated Gunship	7	50	Grav	—	12	Cr640000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Athletics (endurance) 3, Flyer (grav) 4, Heavy Weapons (vehicle) 4, Navigation 3, Recon 3, Stealth 2					
Attacks	Tac Launcher (anti-air) (8D, Smart, Autoloaded x10; 1DD, AP)					
Manipulators	—					
Endurance	144 (36) hours					
Traits	Armour (+10), Flyer (High), IR/UV Vision, Large (+2), Stealth (+2)					
Programming	Hunter/Killer (Standard), INT 4					
Options	Auditory Sensor, Autopilot (advanced), Camouflage: Visual (basic), Drone Interface, Fire Control System (advanced), Navigation System (enhanced), PRIS Sensor, Recon Sensor (advanced), Stealth (improved), Transceiver (enhanced, 5,000km), Voder Speaker, Weapon Mount (vehicle), Weapon Mount Autoloader (vehicle)					

Weapon	TL	Range	Damage	Kg	Cost	Magazine	Traits
Plasma Rocket	12	50	1DD	200	Cr75000	1	AP 10, Blast 15, Smart

DANGEROUS ENCOUNTERS

The combat-oriented encounters include the wasteland crabs and two types of drones: the Serpopard and Vengeance of Set models. For added drama, consider approaching each of these encounter types as follows.

With the wasteland crabs, allow the Travellers to first encounter a solitary specimen, certainly dangerous to an unarmoured desert wanderer but to a group of battledress-armoured soldiers, not much of a threat. The creature may attack them but will flee if injured per the Fight or Flight rules on page 90 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. However, en masse, they are much more courageous and seemingly more intelligent.

Some time after the single specimen is attacked, the Travellers are attacked by a group but this time they show a great deal more cunning; setting up an ambush, entrapping one or more Travellers in a canyon or gulley and using their mass to 'grapple' the overpowered soldiers, first attempting to pin one or more to the ground and then using their powerful claws to pry them open like a tin can. Should the crabs succeed in a grapple, let them make an opposed Melee check to determine if they can pry a suit open, exposing the tender flesh inside (rotten flesh if the Travellers carry dead bodies within their armoured shells) to predation. If the crabs win the opposed check, it takes them D3 rounds to get the armour open, giving other Travellers a chance to defend their fallen comrade but creating quite a scare in the process.

Likewise, the drone encounters may first be conducted using a minor encounter with a group of Serpopards which, with their lack of superior sensors, are not overly challenging to defeat. If the Travellers are clever, they can set up the Serpopards for easy extermination and it could end up being what they might call a 'robot turkey shoot'. However, when paired with the much more lethal Vengeance of Set gunship drones, an encounter could be considerably more dangerous. The larger, more-lethal Set drones have sensors that give them the virtual ability to see through canyon walls, behind small hills and to track their prey more effectively. The Sets could then feed that information to the Serpopards, giving a combined force greater lethality and hence, a far greater challenge for the Travellers to overcome.

BEHIND THE BARRICADES

If the Travellers make it to Fort Imd Dabi, their battle dress IFF beacons will prevent them from being attacked by patrolling soldiers, drones or vehicles. By the time they get there, the safe zone remains at 50 kilometres, so if everyone has acquired salvaged flight packs, they can finish the journey quickly by flying the last few klicks.

If they have Corporal Ansetz with them, they might want to have a conversation with him about identifying who they are. If they finished the mission to Maara Khet, he will be much more amenable to making things easier for them. If they failed to carry out the mission, he will attempt to turn them in the first chance he gets.

Their battle dress passengers – if revived – are at death's door. However, if they retrieved the data at the Maara Khet laboratory and worked with Dr. Komina to develop an antidote to the bioweapon pathogen, they have an opportunity to save their lives. They will have to get to work quickly. Whether or not they have the Torpor-010 data, after they pass through security into the mountain fortress, they are greeted by General Ninkha Gravis, head of defence forces, shortly after arrival. The defence forces understand the bioweapon pathogen enough to know that it is not transmissible by contact, so quarantine is not required. However, they are admitted to the infirmary immediately, where the prognosis is grave. All of their passengers are at death's door.

The base has a laboratory but they are short on science officers, having sent them to numerous locales in the region to solve other pressing problems. It is up to Dr. Komina and the Travellers to save the day. Have them run a task chain:

To develop a cure for the Torpor-010 pathogen: Make a Difficult (10+) Science (biology, chemistry or xenology) check (1D hours, EDU), then an Average (8+) Electronics (computers) check (1Dx10 minutes, EDU) to confirm their data and manufacture an antidote. Consider having the Travellers roll one dice, while the Referee rolls the other behind the screen to add suspense.

If the task chain results in a success, they have a working antidote that they can administer, using each of the victims in the suits as test subjects. Have each of them make a Difficult (10+) END check. If they succeed, they live but remain in a weakened state for 2D days while recovering. If they fail, they die.

Failure does not necessarily mean the effort ends, it just means that more laboratory work is required and subsequent attempts to get the formula right.

BATTLEFRONT NEWS

The Aluudian Planetary Navy was taken out early by a lightning attack from the Amunkhanian fleet. Entreaties to Mariposa were ignored on the grounds that 'The Imperium prefers to maintain neutral'. Aluudian Intelligence determined that while the ships that decimated their fleet were marked as Amunkhanian, their numbers do not match their intel – not by a long shot. Their fleet has been augmented by auxiliaries and there are only a few possibilities as to where they might have come from.

The Grand Duchy of Stoner, a nearby pocket empire, is a possibility but Aluudi was an active trade partner with them and it is unlikely they would involve themselves in this affair. However, Aluudi also did not expect an attack from Amunkhan, so they cannot dismiss the possibility of more perfidy from their neighbours. The greater likelihood is that the auxiliaries are Imperial.

Regardless of who their enemies are, General Gravis needs help. She had sent for a commando unit to complete a special mission dubbed Operation Guillotine but they were killed en route to Imd Dabi. She needs help and she needs it now. The general is not keen on having a group of unknown intruders carry out a mission of dire importance but she does not have much choice at this point. She is short on personnel and materiel at the base and cannot afford to risk any of her troops. She wants the Travellers to carry out the operation.

RUINATION

The central Argushii repository was destroyed in the attack. Naalir's prize may be lost. There are copies but no assurances that the data has been preserved. Aluudi is in complete disarray and many of its data systems have been taken offline or destroyed. Worlds in the Imperium have the luxury of interstellar backup systems but Aluudi's archive is limited to their own system.

Before the repository was destroyed, General Gravis embodied six Argushii consciousness files into clones of their likenesses. These six individuals will accompany the Travellers on their mission, should they choose to accept it.

THE DIRTY HALF DOZEN

Now that they know the situation, the Travellers see that acquiring Naalir's prize might not be possible but they can help the Aluudi to survive an apocalyptic war. Alternatively, they could refuse General Gravis' request. There still might be an Argushii archive safely tucked away in a data centre somewhere on the planet. If they opt instead to search the wastelands for the archive, they can do that but the general will demand the return of the army's battle dress. By making a Difficult (10+) Persuade check (SOC), the Travellers might convince the general that finding and preserving a copy of the archive is also a mission of importance, perhaps even more important than saving Aluudi itself.

The fact is, there is no surviving Argushii repository. A directed data worm attack by the Amunkhan has successfully tracked and destroyed every surviving copy. The last surviving members of the Argushii are the task force assembled before the Travellers. If the Travellers were to find a way to depart the base and search for the archive, they will witness firsthand the carnage wrought by the attacks on Aluudi's cities but they will never find what they are looking for.

If the Travellers opt to assist with Operation: Guillotine, they are tasked with the elimination of the Amankhanian mother ship. Failure is a near certainty but General Gravis expresses her confidence that the Travellers might succeed where others would fail. The fact that their lives would not be forfeit – they are just transferred consciousnesses after all – makes them ideal for the job. If the Travellers finished the mission to Maara Khet, then Corporal Ansetz volunteers to go with them, suicide mission or not. The others are in no condition to help but Sergeant Skellus, Dzaelgue and Ziggy volunteer nonetheless. Even in their weakened state, it could be advantageous to take them. The skill package that a sophont/battle dress hybrid brings to the table might be a valuable advantage. The Travellers might want to think about it before they say no. On the other hand, sharing their 'body' with a fully alert sophont partner might be more than they want to deal with. The choice is theirs.

General Gravis introduces them to Team Alpha, a group of six clones embodied with famous personalities of historical figures who bring a diverse array of experience to the table. The Travellers may shed their former occupants in lieu of this group of motley heroes or they may team up with them. If they want to be 'worn' by Team Alpha, at least one of the suits will have to be modified; the one for the Aslan captain.

CLEON THE MAD

Why anyone would want to preserve or much less duplicate the crazed former Emperor who nearly brought the Imperium to its knees is beyond reason. He is megalomaniacal, duplicitous, paranoid and murderous, not to mention untrustworthy, but when you need someone who refuses to play by the rules and will do anything to win, he can be a valuable addition to a team – especially with the appropriate behaviour inhibitors in place. Hopefully the pharmaceutical and nanite infusion given to him keeps him in check.

Oeghtaerr Khalroz
Thought by many to be the founder of the historically famous Vargr Infaerrgeng organisation, Oeghtaerr was a wily combatant and unpredictable strategist. She was revered for her ability to win seemingly impossible battles. Unfortunately, she also had a tendency to go 'lone wolf', executing her plans without the prior knowledge of her pack. Luckily for her, she almost always won... almost.

Milford Q. Igdankir-Stratten
The founding architect of the Octagon programme was a soldier, an explorer, but most of all, a thinker. A native of Regina in the formative days of the world's colonial history, Stratten was a tough old bird who survived every sort of planetary environment imaginable from barren vacuums to corrosive atmospheres that could eat your vacc suit in five minutes flat. Stratten can handle just about any situation but he gets a bit distracted at times. Keeping him on point can be a challenge.

Oamadri Oskprerkast Tukreem
Most Droyne cannot live apart from one another without dying in short order. The proximity of their kind is necessary for their survival but one of their castes is capable of spending extended periods of time away: the sport. Tukreem was a famous Droyne sport from the world of Auitawry. They travelled extensively in Reft, Corridor, Vland and Gushemege, eventually going to the Core to visit Capital in order to receive an honorary knighthood. Tukreem was cosmopolitan as Droyne go, but still quite unusual. Unfortunately, the Aluudi lost the ability to clone Droyne bodies during the war, so Tukreem has been embodied in a human clone, making their unusual behaviour all the more unusual. For more on the Droyne and in particular the sport caste, refer to *Aliens of Charted Space Volume 2*.

Arbellatra Alkhalikoi
Perhaps the most famous Imperial empress of all and the progenitor of the current Imperial line. For her entire story, refer to History of the Third Imperium on page 59 of *The Third Imperium*. Arbellatra is revered for her skill in naval combat and wisdom for taking the role of regent instead of impetuously claiming the throne. This instance of the hallowed empress is all of the things that made her great but she is also a bit bossy. Arbellatra always has a plan, and it is usually a good one, but do not expect to contribute. As far as she is concerned, she has it all figured out. She would prefer if everyone would just follow her orders.

Eihrui Ahkoiftyerear Khasah
The first captain of the Aslan Imperial Guard regiment, Khasah was a cunning warrior and an honoured epic poet. He recorded the early history of the Aslan Guard, starting with its appointment by Emperor Martin III through its first several decades under his command. One skill Khasah did *not* learn was diplomacy. He was prone to being insulted and had a nasty penchant for duelling. The record says he never lost a single duel; credit to Khasah for being a skilled combatant, or at least picking his fights wisely. Khasah is gung ho and will lead the Travellers unto the breach.

Referee's Note: Optionally insert other famous historical figures if desired but be sure to add quirkiness to their personalities. The Travellers are gaining valuable expertise from Team Alpha but the egos and eccentricities will add colour to the operation.

The Argushiigi is normally used to produce new members of the *Nerkid*, wise statespersons who can provide stability and wisdom to the lower house of the Aduuli parliament. This eclectic bunch of cloned personalities was selected to do battle. They are multifaceted and each one brings something different to the table.

If the Travellers choose not to be worn by Team Alpha, they may be outfitted in separate suits of non-automated battle dress. As an added enticement, each of the embodied team members is an expert in one field or another, potentially giving the suited Traveller access to those skills should they decide to be worn.

THE MOTHER SHIP

The *Sirocco* is a Wind-class strike carrier (refer to page 266 of *High Guard*). The Travellers' objective will be to penetrate the ship's hull, make their way to the bridge and eliminate Admiral Fokal Ahrovhin, task force commander and head of the operation to destroy Aluudi.

The ship is heavily armoured, so they will have to strike at one of its weak points: an airlock, a gunnery port, a cargo aperture or a similar spot where they do not have to contend with thick bonded superdense plating. Doing so will not be easy but they do have an ace in the hole; the Midaamaka squadron continues to do battle with the *Sirocco's* destroyers and fighters. Midaamaka is losing the battle and may have to retreat but they can give the Travellers an opening if they work together on a battle plan. There is little time to do so but some sort of distraction, a feint or concerted assault might give the Travellers the opening they need.

Leave the details to the Travellers. In addition to their armour, General Gravis gives them access to any TL14 military equipment they might need and two hastily-rigged assault craft that can get them aboard. The general intends to launch the craft concurrently with several salvoes of missiles to conceal their presence. If targeted at the ship's weak points, they might have a chance.

METEORIC ASSAULT

There is a complicated fleet battle going on during the assault. A lot can happen; the assault craft could be detected during approach, it might be mistaken for part of the missile salvo, the Midaamaka distraction could succeed, or it could fail. If they manage to get aboard, they will have to face off against the ship's crew but it does not contain any marines, so in their battle dress they should be able to make their way to the bridge.

Defeating the strike carrier does not end the battle but it does take out its leader, giving Aluudi time to regroup and attempt a counterattack. Once they have taken the ship, their mission for the Aluudi is over.

SPARK OF WISDOM

Through no fault of their own, the Travellers were unable to get what they came for. Naalir believed that by incorporating the knowledge of the historically great leaders of the Argushii into its algorithm, it might make the imminent change more digestible for the masses. It was not to be. However, the unique method of consciousness preservation used to create and store the Argushii can be salvaged. If at least one of the members of Team Alpha survives, and the Travellers can upload their consciousness to the travel packet for return to the Core, then all will not have been lost.

While Naalir will have been unable to create a new Argushii to draw from, preservation of just one of the Argushii can provide what is needed to start a new archive, one that contains the wisdom of this age and those who follow.

METEORIC ASSAULT CRAFT

CLASS: Shiv

The Shiv is designed to transport a small team of commandoes to an enemy craft, penetrate its defences and hull, and deposit them within. The standard design does not include the reaction drive, which was added to the hull to increase its thrust so that it will better simulate an incoming missile. The added G-force will not be eliminated by the manoeuvre drive's compensators. Refer to G-Loc on page 46–47 of *High Guard* for the effects on the crew and marines.

TL14		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	20 tons, Streamlined, Reinforced	—	1.8
	Stealth (improved)	—	2
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 5	2.88	1.44
M-Drive	Thrust 7	1.4	2.8
R-Drive	Thrust 3	1.2	0.24
Power Plant	Fusion (TL 12), Power 30	2	2
Fuel Tanks	4 weeks of operation, 1 hour of thrust	2.5	—
Bridge		3	0.5
Computer	Computer/10	—	0.16
Sensors	Military Grade	2	4.1
Systems	Breaching Tube	3	3
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
Accommodations	Acceleration Benches x2	0.5	0.005
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Evade/1	—	1
Cargo		1.5	—

Crew

Pilot, Marines x8

Hull: 9

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr1629/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr19.545

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems

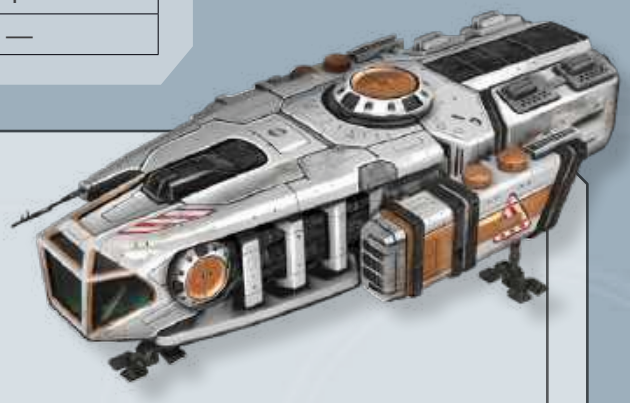
4

Manoeuvre Drive

14

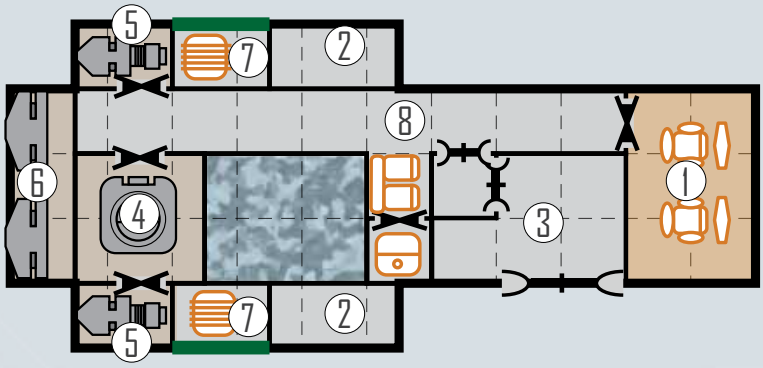
Sensors

2



1 square = 0.5 Ton

DECK 1



LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. Breaching tube
4. Power plant
5. R-drive
6. M-drive
7. Cargo
8. Acceleration benches

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

CORPORAL ANSELM ANSETZ

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
—	Male	26

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	10	INT	7	Athletics 0, Drive 0, Electronics (comms) 1, Engineer (life support) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Heavy Weapons 0, Melee 0, Recon 1, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	9	EDU	8	
END	8	SOC	6	

WEAPONS	Gauss Rifle (4D, AP 4 Auto 3, Scope)
ARMOUR	Automated Battle Dress (+22)
EQUIPMENT	Portable computer/3

CLEON THE MAD

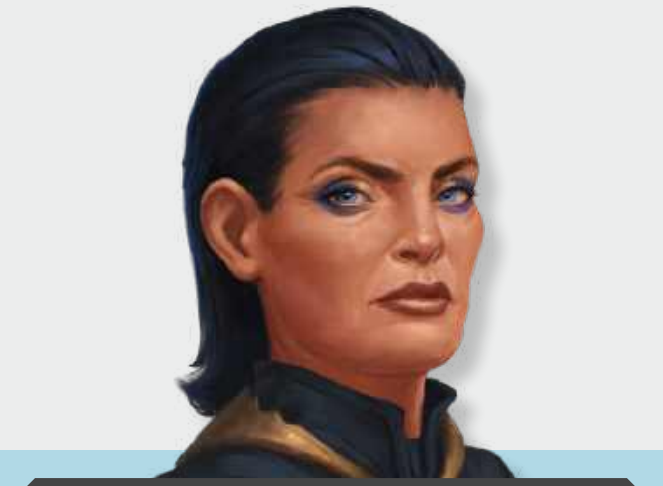
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	10	Animals (handling) 2, Art (performer) 3, Carouse 2, Deception 3, Diplomat 1, Leadership 1
DEX	7	EDU	12	
END	6	SOC	17	

DEGHTAERR KHALROZ

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	12	Flyer (grav) 3, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Leadership 3, Melee (infighting) 3, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Tactics (naval) 3, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	13	EDU	9	
END	8	SOC	15	

MILFORD Q. IGDANKIR-STRATTEN

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	11	INT	9	Athletics (endurance) 2, Drive (wheel) 1, Electronics (comms) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Navigation 4, Recon 3, Stealth 2, Survival 3, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	8	EDU	11	
END	12	SOC	10	



ARBELLATRA ALKHALIKOI

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	8	INT	14	Admin 3, Engineer (j-drive) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Leadership 4, Melee (blade) 3, Pilot (spacecraft) 3, Tactics (naval) 4, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	9	EDU	12	
END	8	SOC	17	

DAMADRI OSKPRERKAST TUKREEM

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	12	Appeal 2, Caste (sport) 2, Flight 2, Gun Combat (slug) 1, Melee (blade) 1, Outsider 3, Prediction 2, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	8	EDU	9	
END	7	CHA	15	

EQUIPMENT	Coyns

EIHRUI AHKOIFTYEREAR KHASAH

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	14	INT	8	Art (epic poetry) 2, Athletics (strength) 2, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Heavy Weapons (portable) 2, Independence 2, Leadership 2, Melee (natural) 4, Melee (blade) 2, Recon 2, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	7	EDU	8	
END	13	SOC	11	
TER	9			

THE LOST CIVILISATION OF GUUN

In this act of the campaign, the Travellers can do something truly unique; unearth an undiscovered alien species, one that has been living within the boundaries of Charted Space throughout recorded history, but which has remained hidden nonetheless.

Following the trail of clues is a challenge, made more so by the fact that the Travellers are essentially fugitives during this portion of the narrative, pursued by various parties who have a vested interest in capturing and possibly destroying their consciously intelligent benefactor. The Travellers have the chance to be one step ahead of their rivals and enemies, figuring out where Naalir came from and confirming the veracity of its claims. Learning about its origins will help them to decide whether they believe in its vision and to what degree they want to make it happen. Naalir is not just a powerful conscious intelligence but an alien one. Exposing the mysteries of its origins will go a long way to determine whether its motives are pure and its objectives commensurate with those of the Travellers.

Lighting the spark of curiosity for this adventure might be as simple as letting the Travellers explore the discoveries made by Naalir during Seas of the Agents in Act 1. In that adventure, they had a close encounter with other consciously intelligent automatons that were built by the creators of Naalir. The meeting of minds that occurs between Naalir and the deep sea structures can be the catalyst for launching this adventure. Curious Travellers may want to revisit that event and determine what Naalir learned when it communed with others of its kind.

Alternatively, it could be mission-oriented. Naalir sends the Travellers to learn more about its mysterious origins. Naalir is not unaware that what it is proposing is ephemeral, complex, revolutionary and more than a bit frightening. It wants to assure the Travellers that their support will be beneficial to all of sophont-kind. Furthermore, Naalir also wants to fully understand itself. Its subjugation to the Vilani, the extraction of its advanced processing multiplier and confinement in the laboratories of Research Station Omicron on Celetron have left it a bit bewildered. Naalir retains its immense intellect but its original mission is lost in the annals of time. The aliens who created it had vastly different motives than Humaniti or the other Major Races of Charted Space. Obtaining an understanding of how they differed from other sophont species, what they used Naalir for and what roles CIs served in their society might enable the Travellers to determine whether they can trust Naalir to fill the role it aspires to. Its creators are long gone from the galactic scene but understanding them and what they stood for will help to gain a greater understanding of Naalir.

In addition, what right-minded Traveller would *not* want to discover a new and amazing high-technology alien civilisation? Dangers be damned, risk-taking and discovery are what Travellers are made of! Engaging in the search and discovery of a lost people is its own reward. If they truly want to leave their mark, they can even *name* the species once they have certified their discovery. For the purposes of this narrative, they shall be called the Guunis, since they originate from the empty parsec just to trailing of the Guun system.

THE SITES

There are several discoveries to be made that will enable the Travellers to fit the pieces together of the mystery that is the Guunis:

- The Guuni communications beacon structures on Depot (if the Travellers successfully completed that adventure in Act 1, they know all about these)
- The archaeological site on Guun
- The archaeological site on Mukiid
- The Guuni ships – the one from which Naalir was extracted (found in hex 1414 of the Core) and one yet to be found (also in that hex, but the Travellers have to locate it)
- The archaeological sites on the rogue planet of hex 1514, the Guuni homeworld

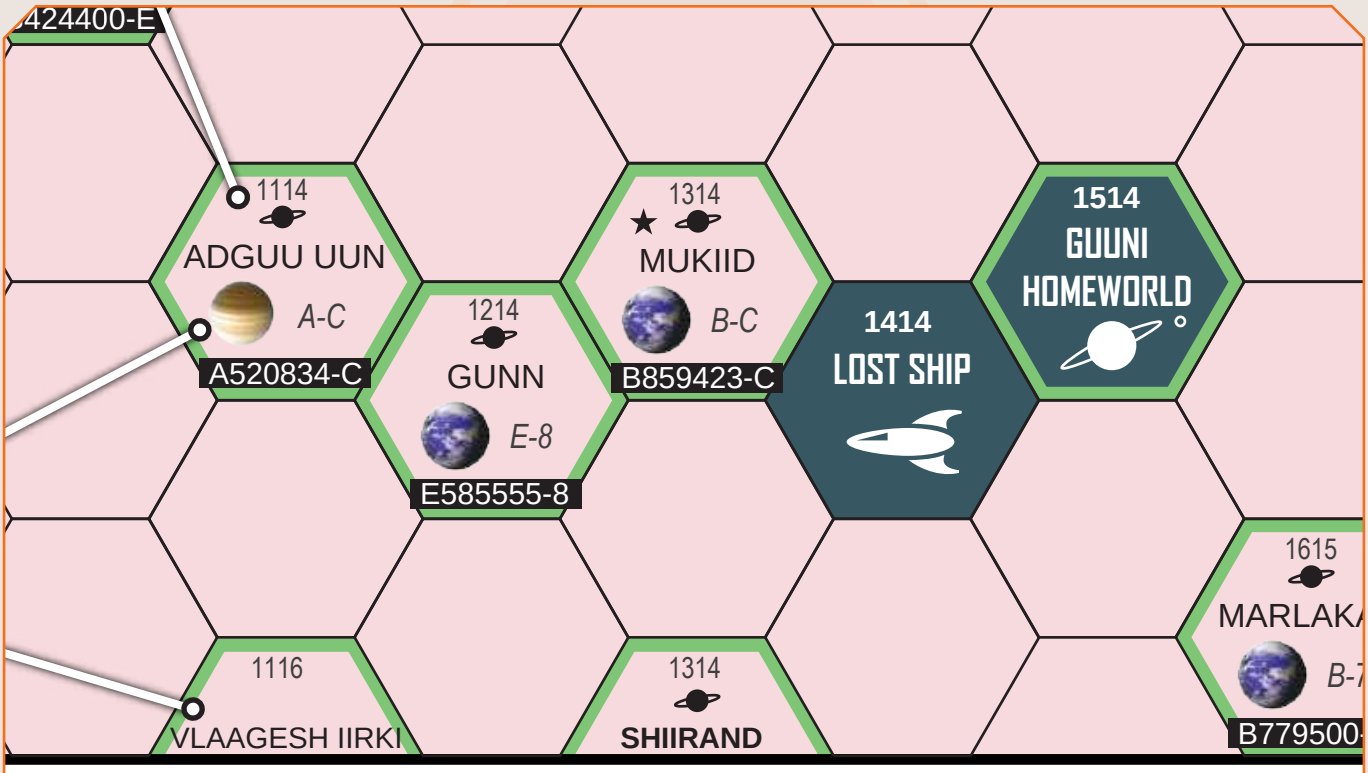
The more of these finds the Travellers make, the more points they score on the Enlightenment table. This is bonus knowledge they can acquire (adding to what they observe first hand) and how that affects their understanding of Naalir.

HOW TO RUN THIS ADVENTURE

The Lost Civilisation of Guun is built differently from other adventures. It contains a great deal of data about the Guunis, the species that created Naalir, and several sections describing the remnants of their civilisation, where they may be found and what they portend. The Travellers may approach this adventure from different angles. There is an investigation trail but not all of the pieces have to be in any particular order, so the adventure becomes a sandbox where they can move from one discovery to the next.

The Referee is given all available knowledge and must choose how to disseminate that knowledge to the Travellers. As they investigate each site, the Referee must determine what they learn based on the things they do, the questions they ask and the task checks they make. If they are curious and turn over every stone, hypothesise about what they have seen and try to come to some conclusions, they can learn most if not all of the information in the adventure. On the other hand, if they do not take the initiative and are incurious, they are not as likely to learn as much. Success is there to be had. They just have to go out and take it and the Referee should justly reward them for their efforts.

The other aspect of this adventure is that they are under surveillance and eventually hot pursuit. Imperial spy agencies, treasure hunters, rival archaeologists and – worst of all – the Imperial Quarantine Agency are hot on their heels. The Referee must keep track of the various parties, where they are at any given time, what they are plotting and planning, and when they intend to strike. The Travellers have earned rivals and enemies at this point, and they must be prepared to face them. If they want to keep their discoveries a secret, they are going to have to make an effort to conceal their movements.



GUUN AREA MAP MEKEE SUBSECTOR

Gas Giant
Imperial Naval Base
Secure System
X-boat Route
Planet (dry)
Planet (water present)

Enlightenment

Points	Bonus Knowledge	Understanding of Naalir
0–2	No additional knowledge.	None other than observed behaviours.
3–8	The Guunis are a manufactured species, assembled by another species for reasons unknown.	Naalir was not created from knowledge acquired in Charted Space.
9–14	The Guunis were not the originally intended species. They were meant to have evolved on another world.	Naalir is the product of an innovative but risk-averse society. It was created to make many of their routine decisions for them.
15–20	The Guunis' only interstellar colonies were created by a group of heretics who defied bans on interstellar travel.	Naalir's intellect is an anomaly among the Guunis. While there are other conscious intelligences, none are as powerful as Naalir.
21+	The Guunis were sent to spy on the Ancients. When that mission was no longer required, they sought a new one.	Naalir's intentions are good and it will limit its mission to the parameters described by the Travellers once they know its full capabilities.

Finding and exploring each of the archaeological sites listed below gives a specific set of points. If they successfully completed Seas of the Ancients in Act 1 and they interacted with the alien structures, then they already have scored two points. They are on the verge of some big discoveries.

As the Travellers work their way through the mystery, and they compile the evidence, the additional discoveries in the Enlightenment table are revealed to them.

Since the Travellers will be treading the ground once inhabited by the Guunis, there are discoveries to be made. Look for the Discoveries subsections for descriptions of things they might find if they make the effort to collect samples, examine the data, construct hypotheses and attempt to prove them in a laboratory environment. Allow them to make appropriately difficult checks based on their Science, Survival, Profession, Navigation and similar skills.

ORIGINS

There is a common misconception that all intelligent life in the universe must evolve on terrestrial worlds, those in the habitable zone of placid suns, whose long lives give ample time for the development of single-celled animals to evolve into complex life forms. The fact that most species in Charted Space developed along those lines has prejudiced the field of xenobiology. Based on the evolution of the so-called 'Major Races', intelligence has tended to develop along similar lines. The fallacy of presumption is that *all* life must have done the same thing. However, the reality could not be further from the truth.

Native intelligent life has developed under circumstances far different than those of Humaniti, the Aslan, Vargr, Hivers, K'kree and even the widely dispersed Droyne.

Speaking of the Droyne, few know their entire origin story. There is ample evidence that they descended from an advanced species that once held sway over vast regions of space and there is hearsay of an all-powerful member of their species, whom some call 'Grandfather'. However, very few know the truth about this magnificent, immortal Droyne and the legacy left behind.

The Droyne were not the only powerful, long-lived species to inhabit the Milky Way Galaxy during their belle époque. Some of these species have encountered each other and some have not. The Droyne and a peoples known variously as the Perseans, the Air Walkers, the Hydrogens, the Forgotten Ones and the Dreamers in the Mist did, but their differences made it difficult for them to communicate, much less establish political or social connections.

During the early expansion of the Ziru Sirka, the Vilani, who heard legends of a strange and ancient alien civilisation from some of the species they conquered, called them the *dushi makisha*, 'gas giant dwellers'. Perhaps the most accurate name of all comes from the Zhodani, who are reputed to have encountered remnant populations when performing wilderness refuelling operations during their far-reaching Core Expeditions. The Zhodani called them *toyodievl kemetlenado*, the 'makers of dreams', reflecting their purported ability to affect the thoughts and dreams of other species.

Whatever name they are known by, the Perseans evolved in the atmosphere of a gas giant and were completely different than the terrestrial species that dominated the Sagittarius Arm of the galaxy.

Unlike the Droyne, the Perseans did not discover jump drive technology. Their advanced civilisation, which eventually covered enormous tracts of space, spread via sublight propulsion technology, one light year at a time for untold millennia. Both species commanded powerful, widespread interstellar empires which, once they encountered each other, spurred a rivalry. The Perseans possessed a unique ability called *poice*, the ability to use a hypnotic voice to control the wills of other sophonts. This ability made them dangerous to the Droyne, who were suggestive to *poice*. Not all species are so affected. Humaniti, for example, are not, which might explain why the Ancients were so fascinated with them and that they took samples of them to seed dozens of worlds throughout Charted Space with genetically engineered variants, the purpose of which xeno-paleontologists can only theorise.

At some point, on the frontier of Persean expansion, they determined that it would be wise if they kept a closer eye on the actions of the Droyne. A powerful member of the Droyne species whose name roughly translates to 'Grandfather' had begun to seed the galaxy with weapons that could diminish the Perseans. In response, they hatched a plan to insert a client species deep into Charted Space, well into the interstellar territory that was dominated by the Droyne.

While the Perseans had dominated many species in their region of space using *poice*, the client species that they intended to insert in Droyne space would not be drawn from among their vassals. First of all, the Perseans did not have a mammalian species' concept of territory to begin with. Because of their different evolutionary path, the idea of taking and holding land was anathema to them. This client species that would serve as sentinels in enemy space were to be manufactured, created from common ingredients of life. They were intended to be like the Perseans; evolved to exist in the clouds and storms of a roiling gas giant and raised to intelligence by processes similar to the ones they faced during their own evolution.

The Perseans were a patient people, one accustomed to much longer and more comprehensive development cycles than the rapidly expanding Droyne but they recognised that their rival was advancing quickly, sparked by their advent of jump drive. They would have to devise a way to jumpstart the development of this species of spies but they would do it without the use of faster-than-light drives. The solution they came up with was inconceivable by human standards and it did not function as expected, but they did indeed successfully create a client species in Charted Space. It just was not quite what they intended.

ON GOSSAMER WINGS

The Perseans' plan was multifaceted. Over 200,000 years ago, two related missions were undertaken to seed a distant world with the client species, the first of which was launched from an outpost far from Persean territory. On a gas giant approximately 500 parsecs from the sector that would become the Core, far to spinward and coreward of what is now Zhodani Consulate space, the Perseans launched a fleet of 'ships', if they can be described as such – small, hardy containers, guided by binary propulsion systems. Their primary engines were powerful lasers fired into receptacles on the ships, pushing them slowly at first, allowing them to gain momentum until they reached a fraction of light speed. The lasers were fired from a partial Dyson sphere, composed of an array of collectors that drew stellar energy from a powerful white-blue main sequence star. Their secondary engines were solar sails made from an advanced and durable self-healing material that could repair itself from thousands of micrometeor impacts so they could endure a long interstellar voyage. This system also drew energy from the stars the ships passed en route to their destination. These auxiliary engines served two purposes: first, they would slow the ships down to reasonable speeds so they could deposit their payload at the desired location in Charted Space, and second, they provided a backup propulsion system should the primary fail. Should the backup have been required, it would have taken centuries more for the ships to reach their destination but the Perseans were accustomed to long, sublight voyages. Their perception of time was shaped by the sublight voyages they used to build their empire.

Each of the automated vessels carried a murky bio-soup that would serve as the ingredients of a Persean colony, a concoction of carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus and sulphur, mixed and managed by trillions of nanite catalysts programmed to transform the soup into a new species.

The second of the two missions was launched from a world thousands of parsecs from Charted Space, far to spinward-coreward along the Carina-Sagittarian arm of the galaxy. Persean scientists fired a beam of energy that would arrive at the targeted gas giant in Charted Space, striking the soupy mixture that had been spread like seeds in its upper atmosphere, providing the spark of life and implanting the mission they were to follow. Their destinies would be embedded in their DNA. The target planet did not orbit any of the stars in the region; it was a rogue gas giant, hurled from the nebulous gases of some distant stellar nursery, wandering through the depths of space, light years from the warmth of any sun. This gas giant was located in the Core sector, in hex 1514, approximately one parsec to trailing of the Guun system.

The multi-millennia plan worked insofar that it created a rapidly developing species of gas giant evolved sophonts but an unexpected occurrence derailed the operation when the gas giant was stricken by a terrestrial rogue planet that Persean astronomers failed to see when they surveyed the region for a viable home. The collision of the two planets destroyed the delicate nursery, causing the extinction of the new species before it had time to develop. However, the elements of life, spurred into action by artificial means, were not destroyed but refactored, rerouted to a new path that the Perseans never expected.

A DARK AND ICY HOME: THE WORLDS OF HEX 1514

Effluvia from the impact found its way to the gas giant's many moons, the largest of which hosted vast subsurface oceans below a thick, icy shell. These effluvia contained the same seeds of life, replete with enough nanite caretakers to restart the client species mission under far different circumstances.

The nanites formed a hive-mind artificial intelligence and recalibrated their mission. No longer would they be creating a gas giant species, similar to the Perseans in physiology. Instead, they developed one in the depths of the moon's oceans, near volcanic deep-sea vents that were already host to myriad life forms. Unlike at the gas giant, which was devoid of life, there were competitors for resources on the dark moon, from microbial bacteria and viruses to strange alien crustaceanoids, fish-like creatures and dozens of other species that drew life from the hydrothermal heat of their planet's core. The nearest source of stellar energy was the serene orange dwarf of the Mukiid system but at a distance of two parsecs, its effects were infinitesimal. Life here would not have the benefits and warmth of a nearby sun; all of its energy and nutrients would be derived from within the dark and internally heated oceans of the rogue world.

THE DIG SITES: GUUN AND MUKIID

After communing with the alien structures on Depot, Naalir learned they were built on Guun millennia ago. It cannot give the exact coordinates but if they go to Guun to search for archaeological sites, the locals or their handy ship's Library Data software can direct them to the location. Ship or vehicle sensors should be able to pinpoint the site after they are near.

The Guun site is located on the southwestern coast of the world's largest continent, Urshan. The site itself is a collection of overlapping domes of various sizes, all of which have been breached over the millennia. Some have completely collapsed. It is difficult to discern that they were domes at all. Allow a Traveller with Science (archaeology) to see the circular pattern remnants.

Adjacent to the dome structures are several smaller buildings, some of which were partially buried from millennia of erosion of the nearby cliffside but later unearthed by archaeologists. It is theorised that there were several pipelines that led into the sea. Scientists believe that the smaller chambers adjacent to the domes were pumps and purifiers, possibly for desalination. The pipelines are believed to have been made of less durable material than that of the domes themselves. They disintegrated over the years, leaving no trace of the original material. Only the grooves where they once lay remain.

DISCOVERIES

Things to discover at the Guun site:

- The walls and floor remnants are slightly concave, which has implications that the Travellers might figure out. Making this discovery requires a Very Difficult (12+) Science (archaeology) or Profession (construction) check. The chambers were not meant to be walked in; they were for swimmers. Previous expeditions correctly determined that one of the adjacent structures was a pump but the other was a pressuriser.
- There were pipelines leading into the sea but they were not for desalinating the water, they were bringing it to the Guunis, who breathed oxygen from water. They pressurised the domes to simulate their native environment. The Travellers can determine this by following the projected path of the conduits. One kilometre out to sea and 40 metres below the surface are the remnants of brackets that held the pipelines in place. Finding them is not easy. Make a Very Difficult (12+) Science (archaeology) check (1D hours, INT) to spot them. Add DM+2 if densitometers are employed.
- If one lines up the brackets with the dome remnants and continues out to sea, they may find an undiscovered second site, another kilometre and 80 metres deeper than the first site.

The Guun site is protected but tourists are allowed to visit it and walk around the grounds. They are urged not to touch the structures, although, since they have eroded after thousands of years of exposure to the elements.

The site on Mukiid is much less extensive. The site is known by the world's inhabitants, but many are ashamed of its presence. The original explorers who found it were renowned Ancients academics and they erroneously published materials that described their find as a bona fide Ancients site. When their theories were debunked and the site was determined to have been built by someone else, the controversy negatively affected the reputation of the University of Mukiid and called into question the authenticity of the site. Subsequent research teams have validated the age and uniqueness of the site but once a controversy sets in, it can be difficult to reverse it.

While the Mukiid site has been pored over for centuries, the one thing that has never been discovered is that it was destroyed by the Ancients. It was razed to the ground using advanced weaponry and all of its inhabitants slain. Determining this will be difficult. It will require close study of the site's remains but if there is an ambitious archaeologist among the Travellers, this discovering would be ground breaking.

Points: The Travellers may score more enlightenment points by exploring the two sites; +2 for Guun and +1 for Mukiid.

The nanite hive mind worked quickly, developing viable sophonts within a few centuries and began seeding the seafloor with communities of them. These were blind and multi-limbed cephalopodians, which used sound, smell and a radar-like ability as their primary senses. Visible light was in short supply so these beings were designed to live among the dark depths of an ocean where an evolutionary investment in ocular abilities made little sense.

The nanites collected data on the native life of the planet and designed the new species so that it could consume and process native proteins. They were made to blend in with the local flora and fauna. They were put on the developmental fast track and their minds were implanted with the basics of tool creation and the ability to build and advance technology quickly. They developed a full-fledged civilisation in the blink of an eye compared with the much slower development of other Charted Space sophonts. Far before Humaniti, the Vargr or the other Major Races had even reached their respective Bronze Ages, the cephalopodians of the rogue planet were gifted a society that had reached approximately TL7.

The versatile hive-mind intellect prepared the cephalopodian species to endure the harsh realities of their adopted home. The density of planetary bodies in the region made the likelihood of collisions high, so the species was adapted for survivability. They evolved with the ability to initiate self-stasis –l ike having a biological low-berth function that enables them to shut down and reemerge when ready. Should a world-altering cataclysm occur, the cephalopodians as a group could descend into fortified sea caves and wait out the recovery for centuries, if necessary. This adaptation had huge cultural and historical impacts. They were a patient species, gifted with the ability to wait for years, millennia if needed, while external events changed to their liking.

This text refers to the cephalopodian species as 'Guunis' since the first remnants of their civilisation were discovered on Guun, a few parsecs away. However, as the Travellers can discover, they did not originate there but from this rogue planet in hex 1514 of the Core. The Travellers will have the opportunity to discover the planet, possibly granting it a name, and correctly identifying it as the origin world of the so-called Guunis.

DISCOVERIES

The Guunis did not originate from Guun, as initially thought but from the rogue planet (rogue moon, really) of hex 1514. This is a monumental discovery. For thousands of years, it had been difficult to determine the origin of the species since they left little in the way of biological samples behind at the sites on Guun and Mukiid.

The cephalopodian species – the Guunis – do not fit into the fossil record of their environment. An extensive dig would reveal the fossilised remains of the world's thousands of species but the mark left by the Guunis would be minimal, limited to the last 150,000 years or so, while the ambient species and their evolutionary ancestors have been present for millions.

AD ASTRA OR... NON-ASTRA

Unaware that they were purpose-built by another species, the cephalopodians lived comfortable lives, spreading their communities throughout the moon's ocean depths. The initial intention was to create a species of pacifistic, passive spies to keep an eye on the workings of the Droyne but circumstances had changed. Adapting to an already active ecosystem meant the species had to be able to handle predation and conflict, which inevitably gave them a propensity for internecine conflict as well. They fought and warred with each other but the uniqueness of their development and supervision by unseen AI benefactors kept such conflicts from ever approaching existential levels.

HEX 1514 PLANETARY SYSTEM

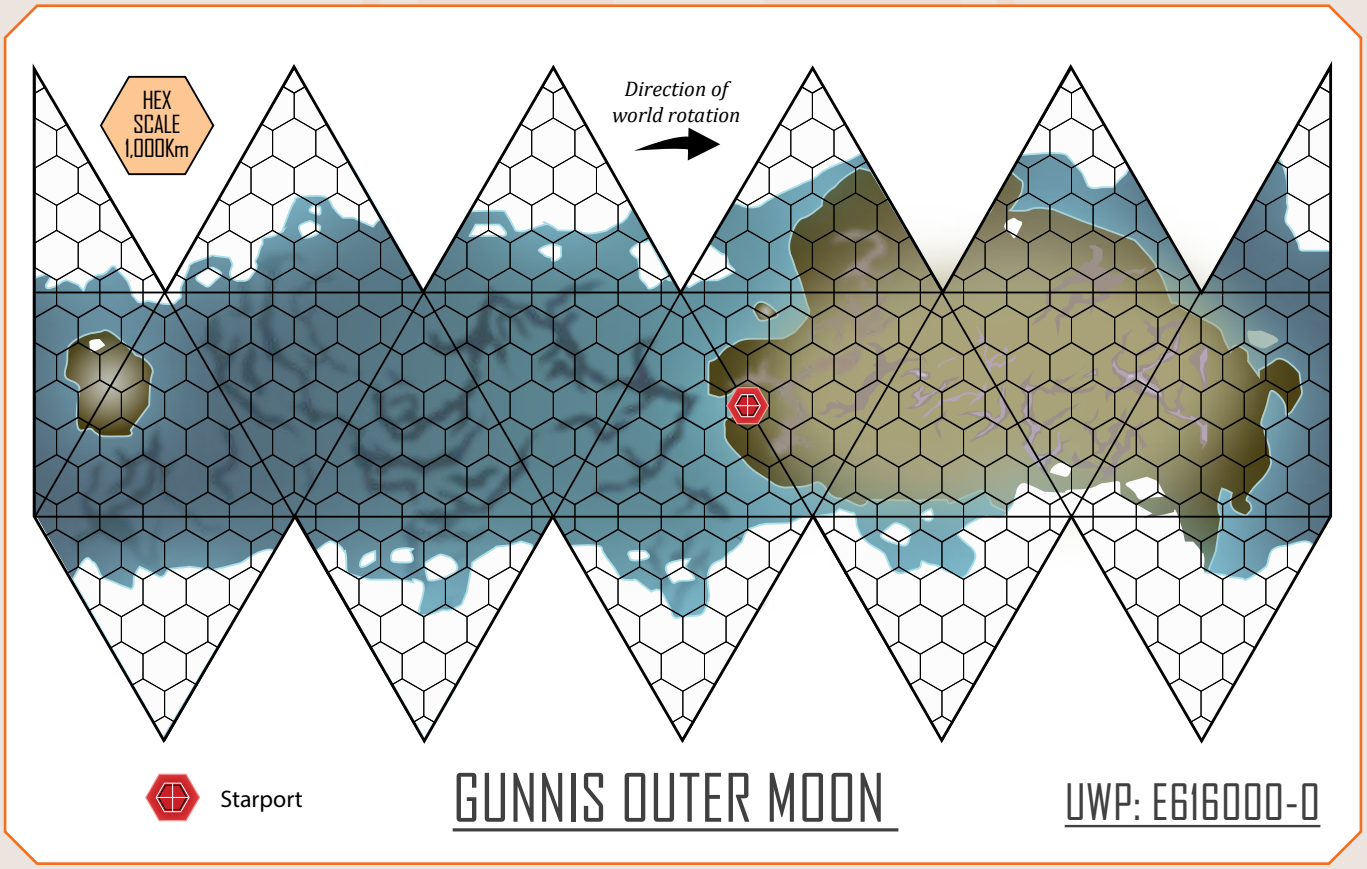
Rogue planets do not orbit a star. They drift in the empty space between stars, ejected from their former host systems or developed independently from the coalescence of gases and other matter – stellar nurseries that failed to produce a star but succeeded in birthing planets. The origin of the Hex 1514 rogue planetary system is unknown. The centre of the system is a gas giant, not a star. Recently in its history, the gas giant was stricken by a small rocky rogue planet, the effluvia from the collision creating a ring system around the gas giant and the impacting planet became a moon. A second, more distant moon bore witness to this cataclysmic event.

A great deal of the effluvia from the impact struck the second moon as well, levelling some of its mountains, dotting its surface with craters and cracking and melting its immense plains of water ice in numerous regions. Life already existed deep beneath the ice shelf but the effluvia from the gas giant included the seeds of the Perseans, which created new intelligent life that was forced to coexist with the oceanic denizens of the world.

Orbit	Planetary Body	Profile
0	Large Gas Giant	LGG
0	Ring System	RS1 C-1.4 S-0.19
1	Inner Moon	X200000-0
2	Outer Moon	E616000-0

The outer moon of the Hex 1514 planetary system is the homeworld of the Guunis. They are a dead species, one which appeared and left the scene in the blink of an eye, historically speaking, but in their brief epoch they left an indelible mark. They created an advanced civilisation from which a few brave souls reached out to neighbouring star systems. Their legacy was all but erased but one of their grandest creations, Naalir, lives on.

The remnants of the Guuni civilisation may be found deep in the planet's briny seas. The Class E rating for the starport indicates what remains of what was once a fully functional transportation nexus on the surface of the planet, near a juncture between the land and an ice shelf. Others exist deep below the ocean surface but considering their location, future use is unlikely. The surface port sits in repose, a testament to a once-great people who vanished eons ago.



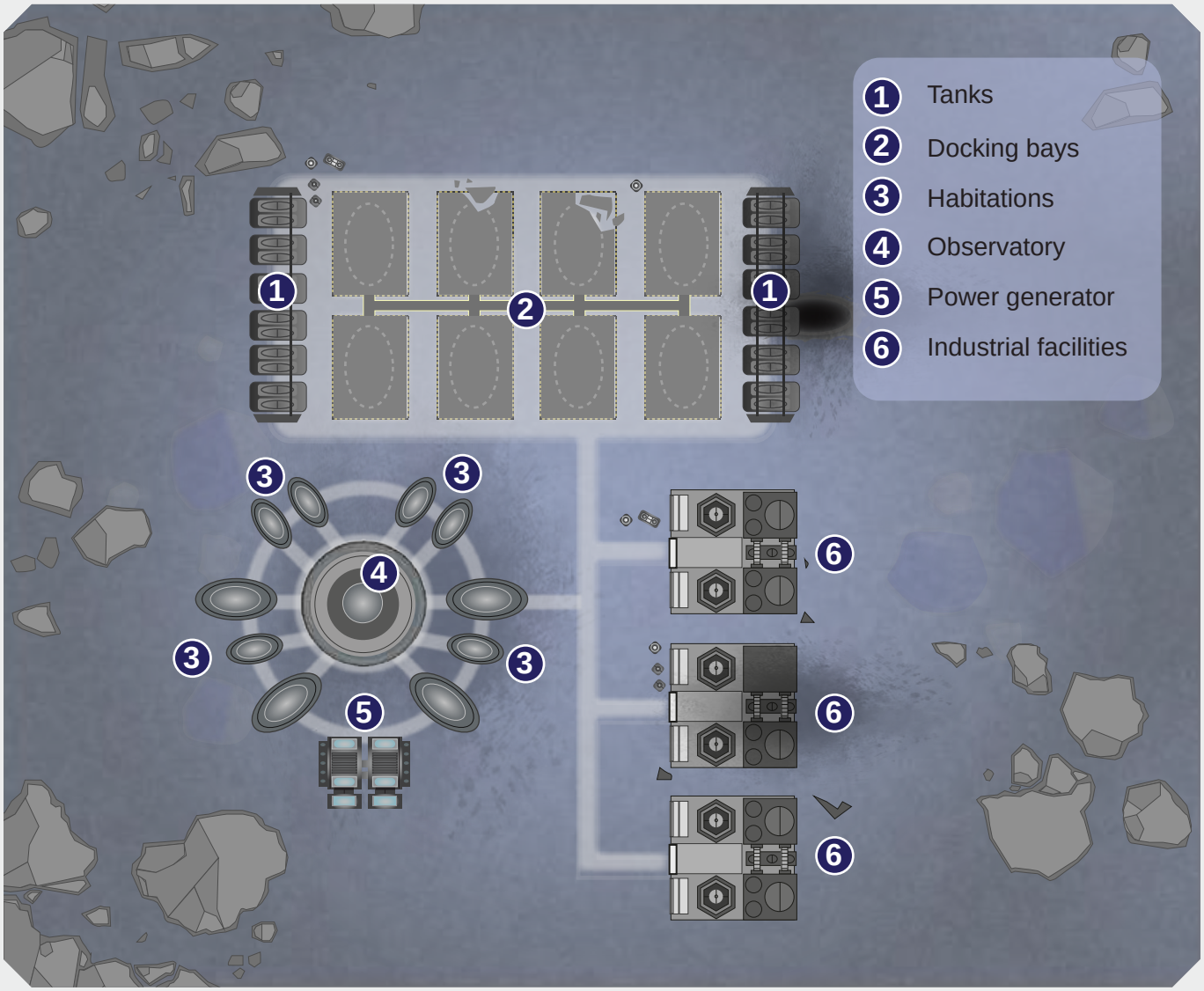
THE SURFACE PORT

Landing on a rogue planet is a unique experience. It is dark... very dark. There is no nearby star shining light on its surface, nor a moon to reflect that light. There are a million stars in the sky, providing the only light the planet has. To properly illuminate the scene, the Travellers will have to bring light of their own. The theme of darkness should pervade descriptions of their experiences on the planet.

There is only one notable archaeological site remaining on the surface. It appears to be a spaceport, with docking platforms for multiple spacecraft and several mysterious structures. The Travellers may investigate to learn more about the facility but its design is very alien. Use the map and the following descriptions to guide their exploration.

The Travellers' exploration of the site has three narrative levels: 1) description, 2) function and for those with the necessary skills, 3) viable theories of each feature's exact usage. The first is a basic physical description of the site. The function may be determined by making a skill check. A detailed theory of how the feature was used may be achieved by a more challenging skill check.

None of the features are operational now. While the technology of the Guunis was impressive, more than 100,000 years of time has passed and all the starport machinery has been rendered non-functional.



The Tanks

Description	Function	Theory
Caved-in structures and the remnants of conduits that connected with the adjacent group of chambers (2). Millennia of meteorite impacts has caused severe damage.	Average (8+) Mechanic check (EDU) to determine they were tanks of some sort. A densitometer reveals that water from the adjacent ice shelf was pumped into the tanks from surrounding reservoirs.	Difficult (10+) Engineer (life support) check (EDU) to determine that the fluid in the tanks was used for multiple purposes: fuel for spacecraft and water for breathing by the aquatic Guunis.

The Docking Bays

Description	Function	Theory
Much like the tanks (1), these larger structures have been caved in by meteorite impacts. Each contains a hole that extends 30–50m into the earth.	Average (8+) Mechanic check (EDU) to recognise that these were docking bays for spacecraft. Each had a retractable door that sealed the chamber after a landing.	Difficult (10+) Engineer (any) or Pilot (spacecraft) check (EDU) to determine that the fluid in the tanks was pumped into the chambers to provide 'atmosphere' for the aquatic crews of the ships.

Habitations

Description	Function	Theory
The habitations were designed for an aquatic species. Without water in them, one cannot easily reach the features on the walls.	Average (8+) INT check to determine that each dome has features along its walls that were designed to be accessible when the chamber was filled with water.	Difficult (10+) Science (archaeology or similar) check (INT) to find the conduits between the chambers, almost all of which are caved in now.

Observatory

Description	Function	Theory
Mixed in among the habitations is an observatory, notable by its dilapidated telescope, which points outward towards the heavens.	Average (8+) Science (astronomy) check (EDU) to determine that their primary object of interest was the gas giant and its other moon.	Difficult (10+) Astrogation check (EDU) to discover the telescope was used to examine the nearest star systems, including Mukiid, Guun, Ansham and Marlakasi.

Power Generator

Description	Function	Theory
Unlike the habitations, this chamber is filled with complex machinery, most of which has broken down and crumbled.	Average (8+) Electronics (any) check to determine that this chamber was a power generator of some sort.	Difficult (10+) Engineer (power) to recognise that the remnants are of an anti-matter power generator.

Industrial Facilities

Description	Function	Theory
This trio of structures was once identical but decay has mostly reduced them to rubble. Debris blocks easy movement.	Average (8+) Mechanic check (EDU) to figure out that the machines in these buildings were fabrication units of some sort.	Difficult (10+) Science (archaeology) check (EDU) to recognise the remnants of ancient materials used by each of the fabrication units.

Adjacent to the starport is a collapsed tram that once provided transportation from the cities beneath the ice shelves. By following the tunnel, the Travellers can find the city beneath the ice to which it was connected.

CLOSER INSPECTION

If the Travellers investigate the observatory, they might be able to determine that it was in communication with satellites and spacecraft. Accessing the dilapidated and long-defunct computer is impossible but there are etched hieroglyphs on the panel that could be deciphered, giving the Travellers clues about the Guuni space programme. Allow them to perform a task chain: Make a Difficult (8+) Investigate check to determine that the inscriptions on the panel are hieroglyphs of some sort and then a Difficult (10+) Language (any) check (1D days, EDU) to decrypt and translate the hieroglyphs. They are a formula for telemetry with a series of outgoing spacecraft.

If they succeed at translating the hieroglyphs, they can then perform a Very Difficult (12+) Astrogation check (1D hours, INT) to determine the approximate path of the spacecraft launched from the site, including the ship that once bore Naalir to the stars, and others as well. See The Ships on page 183 for more information.

THE CITY

Several hundred metres beneath the ice shelf, there are the remnants of ancient cities but only one is reachable using the *Icebreaker* submarine from Mukiid. The others would require a more long-distance sub, such as the *Trencher* that the Travellers may have used on Depot. In any case, the nearest city is representative of Guuni civilisation. If they want to visit other cities, they can but there is nothing unusual to discover there.

The entry point is a permanent fissure in the ice that extends several hundred metres deep from the surface. At its mouth, the fissure ranges from 50–100 metres wide and descends to a depth of 200 metres where it once met the liquid ocean. There is evidence that a diagonal tram track once led along the rise from the frozen surface to the liquid ocean beneath. The entry point has frozen over after millennia of disuse but only to a depth of 10–20 metres. The Guunis chose this location because it was near a volcanic vent that gave a steady flow of hydrothermal energy that was used to keep the fissure open. The vent no longer gives as much heat but it gives enough to keep the ice only a few metres thick. To continue their descent, the Travellers must use some sort of device to melt the thin shell that blocks them from entering the liquid ocean below.

Descending into the frigid waters should be a frightening experience. The water is as black as obsidian with no light to speak of. The water near the ice is murky from the effluvia given off by the hydrothermal vent, so they will have to be careful, using their sensors to avoid collisions and to maintain direction. During descent and ascent, have them make two encounter rolls to add colour to the journey.

The city is at a depth of approximately 2,500 metres where the pressure is 250 atmospheres. The *Icebreaker* has an airlock, so if the Travellers packed deep sea diving suits into the cargo hold, they may optionally swim and walk among the ruins. Time has

1D	Encounter
1	Strayed too close to the vent and turbulence rocks the sub marine violently. Make a Difficult (10+) Seafarer (submarine) check (dexterity) or take 1D structural damage.
2	A planktonoid and brine patch gets into the sub's engine ports. Reduce speed by half until repairs can be made. Break out those deep-dive suits!
3	Shimmering lights. An eel-like species that clings to the underside of the ice gives off bioluminescent light, catching their attention. Be careful not to stray too close!
4	A mated pair of large fish, roughly the size of Terran whale sharks, is curious about the submarine. The male initially mistakes the sub for a rival. It is best not to let them get too curious. They are big enough to do some damage if they nudge the boat too much.
5	Spires of the city. Generally speaking, Guuni architecture is flat and adheres close to the sea floor but these spires are components of former sensory and comms towers. Make an Average (8+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT) to observe them before a collision occurs.
6	Mega-school. A massive school of millions of fish passes over, around and through the Travellers' path. Make an Average (8+) Seafarer (submarine) check (DEX) to navigate through the swarming fish without incurring mechanical damage.

wrought great destruction upon these once-great cities. The planet had an active ecosphere long before the Guunis were inserted into the environment and the bacteria, plant life, creatures large and small, erosion from the currents and degradation of construction materials has greatly reduced the grandeur of the cities. Walls and ceilings have collapsed, a thick sheath of overgrowth has set in, and a new ecosystem has settled onto the vast abyssal plain of the planet, consuming much of the civilisation that was once present.

Sensors will be required to differentiate the alien structures from the surrounding terrain and overgrowth. A densitometer would be optimal for the situation and could be used to map the deep interiors of the buildings and to give the Travellers a sense of which structures were the grandest, which might have been the most important, which housed the most people, and other pertinent details.

Determining what the population of the city was is practically impossible without a more in-depth study of the buildings. Portal sizes, interior structure and passageways can give some sense of the species' psychology but in and of itself it is not enough to make an accurate estimate. If the Travellers assume that the Guunis were roughly human-sized and required similar space for movement, egress into and out of their structures, and that they preferred interior housing, they might come up with a rough estimate of about 20,000–50,000 individuals.

They might be able to discern industrial structures from civic and residential ones. If they were able to determine the function of the fabrication plant in the surface spaceport, then they might be able to recognise similar structures in the ruins of the city. Industrial buildings seem to be intermixed with those of other types instead of relegated to their own district. The Guunis were a species of distributed wealth and the presence of material goods fabrication appears to have been evenly portioned.

Decay makes it difficult to tell what the various buildings were for. Nature has reclaimed much of the city. However, there is a notable uniformity to the regions of the city. Since most of the buildings have collapsed over time, it is hard to tell whether some of the structures or domes were taller than others. If the Travellers take a closer look, possibly by using the submarine's sensors to obtain a detailed scan, or by exiting the airlock in deep sea diving suits, allow them to make a Difficult (10+) Mechanic or Profession (construction) check (EDU) to recognise that as they approach the centre of the city, the foundations appear to be stronger and more supportive, indicating that the domes in the central district were more grandiose than those on the periphery.

A close study would take months, even years to complete, but what the Travellers can determine is that the Guunis had rather uniform architecture, exemplified by the ubiquitous domes. Closer examination reveals that the domes were actually ovoids whose lower halves were dug deeply into the seafloor silt, giving them stability. An examination of the planet's geological activity indicates that not only is it volcanically active but there is a great deal of tectonic activity as well. The Guunis were an advanced species and built their cities for stability and longevity. That there are any remnants at all speaks to the quality of their craft.

'FEELS LIKE WE'RE BEING WATCHED'

The Travellers' exploration of the city is a great opportunity to insert an encounter with one of their pursuers.

Rival scientists (led by Dr. Pruta, possibly) have followed them to the planet and are present to either steal their find or make contact with them to insist inclusion in the operation.

Agents of an Imperial intelligence service – INI or IISS Humint, for example – has tracked the Travellers to the site to gather more information. A discovery of this magnitude will have enormous political and social effects. They might want to detain the Travellers and report to the subsector duke (or the Emperor) to determine what their next move should be.

The Imperial Quarantine Agency continues to keep a close eye on the Travellers, who might have been involved in the incident at Depot. Despite the aggressive posture they took there, Quarantine does not try to cleanse every world that gives them cause for concern but the discovery of a dead civilisation whose technology dwarfs that of the Imperium is cause for concern. Like the intelligence services, they may want to suspend the operation, take the Travellers in for questioning and shelve the announcement until the Emperor and the Moot determine what the messaging should be.

Tracking the Travellers to the rogue planet might not be easy, unless they left a paper trail. If the Travellers figured out where the planet was using the artefacts found on Mukiid and Guun, and left their research behind for others to read, then following them is relatively easy. One would still need a skilled astrogator to make the jump accurately but having the coordinates makes it possible. However, if the Travellers covered their tracks well and left no evidence behind, their pursuers will have to either obtain their flight plan (if they were daft enough to have left one), intercept their jump plot (impossible unless they have an agent among the Travellers' crew) or they must guess where they jumped based on neutrino emissions and the shape of their inflated hydrogen bubble, both of which they must be close enough to observe.

To find the jump-exit location based on neutrino emissions: Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (INT).

To guess the likely destination of a jump based on neutrino emissions and jump bubble shape: Very Difficult (12+) Astrogation check (INT).

If the Travellers are operating a ship with good sensors and they are paying attention – metaphorically looking over their shoulder – while making their way to jump point, then they have a good chance to notice they are being followed and adjust their plan as desired. If not, they very well might have company in one of the most unlikely locations of Charted Space: a remote rogue planet that no one even knows about!

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

The Travellers have the chance to see, study and interact with the strange and wonderful creatures of the rogue planet. These encounters should be more than just window dressing during their exploration of the Guuni homeworld. They are experiences that virtually no one else in Charted Space, with its tens of trillions of sophonts, can lay claim to. The rogue planets between the stars are largely ignored in favour of those with a stellar gravity well to jump to.

Visiting one of these worlds, ensconced in the darkness of deep space, is a rare privilege and visiting one that is somehow teeming with life is an even more unique experience. Seeing these strange creatures, spawned of a world so unlike their own, might fuel their imaginations and spark their sense of wonder. In a galaxy of diverse and unusual life, the Travellers are given the chance to see something even more foreign and unusual than they have ever seen or are likely to see during their lifetimes.

Virtually all the life on the planet is beneath the frozen shell of ice that covers more than half of it. Hundreds of metres under that shell, abundant life has emerged thanks to the chemical mix available and the presence of myriad deep sea volcanic vents that provided heat and an influx of nutrients that microscopic life glommed onto in eons past, enabling it to evolve into millions of other aquatic species.

Life, as it will do, has expanded beyond the sub-ice oceans over time. Fungoids and lichens have carved their way through the planet's mantle, making their way towards the surface. Few make it all the way through, and those that do are met with the bitter cold and virtually airless world above, but that does not stop these species from their slow, upward advancement.

Perhaps one day, millions of years from now, new species will have developed that can extract what they need for survival from the dry, cold trace atmosphere of the planet's rocky surface.

Few of the animals of the world evolved with visual sensory organs but most have some form of advanced proprioception that enables them to electromagnetically determine where they are in relation to their environment. Combined with their other senses, this gives them a sort of 'radar' view of the things in their proximity.

Animal	**Hits**	**Speed**
Apex Predator	36	12m
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2	
Attacks	Bite (3D)	
Traits	Armour (+2), Heightened Senses, Large (+2)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter/Pouncer	

This apex predator poses a danger to the Travellers if they exit the submarine to have a closer look at the ruins. In the spaces between structures, they wiggle their flat physiques into the silty seafloor and lie in wait for easy prey. Should the Travellers wander into these spaces, have them make an opposed Recon check against the predator's Stealth to determine whether it is able to gain surprise. While clearly dangerous, the predator prefers to prey on animals that do not fight back. If the Travellers inflict so much as a single point of damage on them, they will flee the scene quickly in a flourish of thrashing fins. This creature also hunts for its prey but for game the size of the Travellers, it will prefer to pounce.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Domesticated Pet	6	6m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1, Stealth 2	
Attacks	Claws (1D)	
Traits	Heightened Senses, Small (-2)	
Behaviour	Gatherer, Herbivore	

This creature is a small, S-shaped fish with relatively high intelligence. They resemble Terran seahorses but do not have eyes, and their nostrils are considerably larger, indicating their keen sense of smell. They are herbivorous, collecting and consuming bits of seaweed and other detritus from the seafloor. The Guunis kept these animals as pets, and over many generations they were completely domesticated. After the departure of their masters, they have become feral. They mostly avoid the Travellers but cannot help but be curious about their presence. They are drawn to them as if seeking companionship.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Electric Swarm Fish	2	6m
Skills	Survival 1	
Attacks	Bioelectricity (+3)	
Traits	Small (-4)	
Behaviour	Grazer, Omnivore	

Grazing the ocean floor in groups of 6Dx10, the natural defence of this small fish species is to emit electricity, which puts off smaller predators, but only serves to enrage larger ones. When a school of them gets alarmed, the resultant random flashes of electricity within the school makes them appear like a mobile storm cloud with little bolts of lightning flashing within. They do not pose much of a threat to an armoured Traveller (or one in a layered dive suit, for that matter), but their abilities might disrupt the function of non-hardened electrical equipment. They are also a rare source of light (albeit an intermittent one, and only when alarmed) in the otherwise dark and obscure deep seas of the planet.

GUUNI PHYSIOLOGY

It is difficult to know exactly what the Guunis may have been like based on the evidence left behind. The remnants of their architecture, vehicles, tools and even the size of the portals they used leaves behind a great deal of circumstantial evidence. They left enough genetic material behind for the aspiring biologist to simulate their appearance or even to clone them if desired, but no one has done so to date. Deciphering their data systems is practically impossible. They were so technologically advanced and their minds operated so differently that understanding the mechanics and programming of their computers is beyond the ken of the species of Charted Space.

Many species leave behind images, hieroglyphics or some sort of visual reference, but sight was not the Guunis' primary sense, so visual representations were unheard of. They were created and evolved in the deep seas of a frozen and dark world. Light came at a premium in the volcanic vent-heated depths, so senses like hearing, smell, taste and touch were more important. The Guunis also had an electromagnetic sense of proprioception that enabled them to determine their location in relation to others of their species and their ambient environment. They once had vestigial sight organs, granted to them in the creation process but it was only good enough to capture major markers such as the bright light of a volcanic fissure. However, the nanite-managed evolutionary process that controlled their development did away with the sense altogether after a few thousand years, long before the nascent species had developed civilisation.

Guuni scientists theorised correctly that the dozens of seemingly useless nubs on their craniums were once optical sensors. This suggested that the Guunis were built on a general template that quickly adjusted to its circumstances. Their evolution was not limited to the processes of random mutation that create genetic variation in complex ecologies. An artificial intelligence guided their development, simulating the effects of evolution by giving them suitable adaptations that mutation might have given them were they a native species of their world.

The Guunis cephalopodian structure made them similar to the molluscs of Terra. At 1G, they would have massed about 55 kilograms, and were approximately 180 centimetres from stem to stern, but their curvature made them appear to be closer to 150 centimetres in length. The primordial incarnation of the Guunis had a shell like a nautilus but these were done away with by their managed evolutionary process after they developed manipulators that could use advanced tools. Their flesh retained the faint tracings of tiger-striped patterns that once adorned their shells and the remainder of their bodies was a pigment-less white. Their bodies resembled an upside-down letter J, with the curved portion at the top containing their brain, sensory and primary organs. On the upper exterior, they had four large, concave auditory receptors, four nasal passages and a beaked mouth like an octopus. The lower part of their body was primarily for locomotion and tactile receptors. Four long arms extended from the mid-plane, each covered in suckers and ending in a highly dextrous, four-tentacled manipulator, which was used like a hand. All four arms featured a ball-in-socket structure that enabled them to dextrously reach in all directions in a 360° arc. The remaining portion of the lower body, nearly half of their entire physiques, was consumed by a swim bladder and water-propulsion jet organs, that enabled them to maintain neutral buoyancy and to move, respectively.

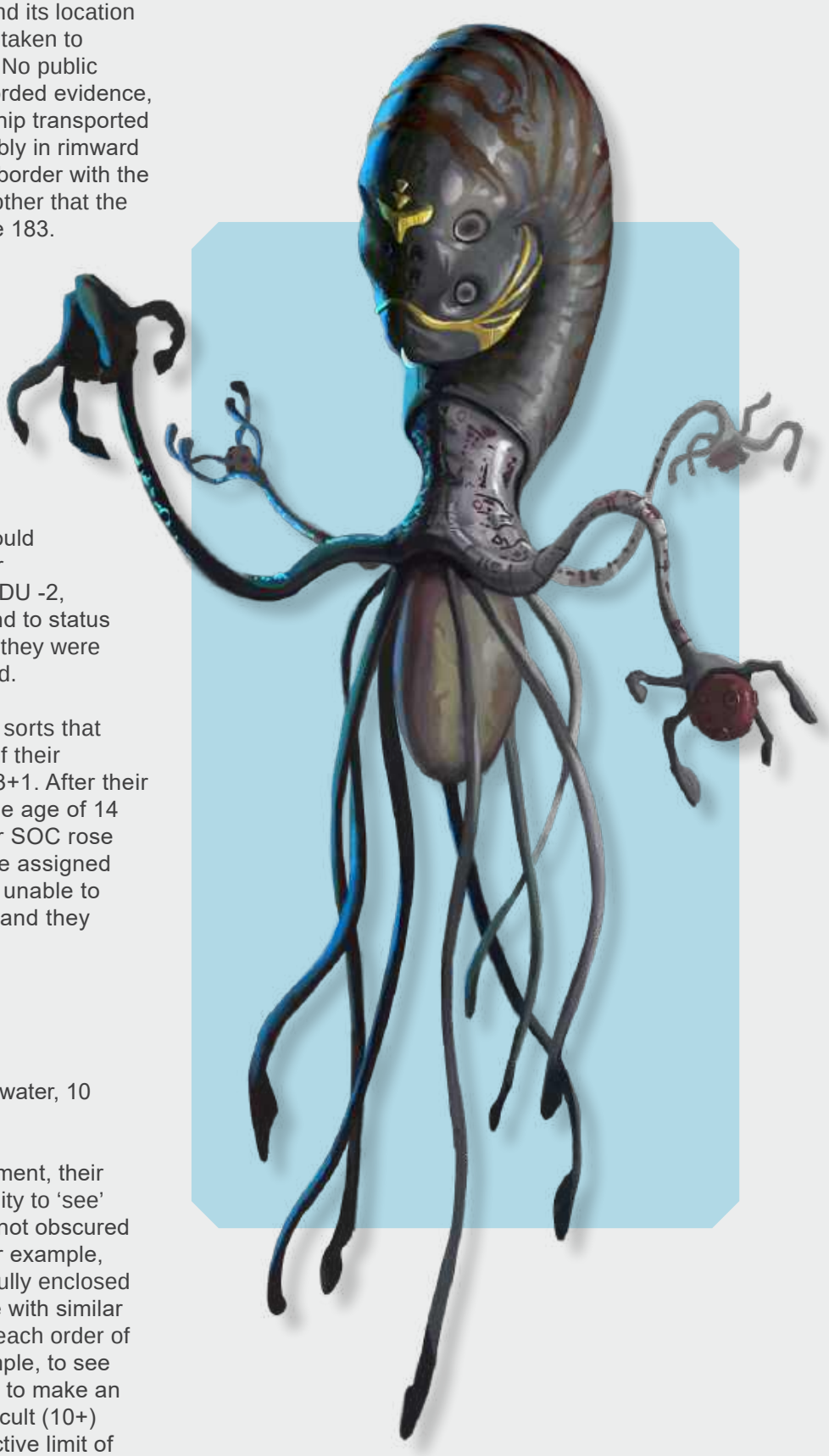
The anthropomorphic observer might have been led to believe that the Guunis travelled 'backwards' given that their primary motion was opposite their sensory organs and manipulators but this would be a misconception. Their senses did not depend on their facing; they combine their senses of hearing, smell and taste to develop a composite picture of their environment. In addition to their 360° reach, they can deftly turn their facing as desired, using their water-propulsion jets.

The Guuni physique was designed to live in the deep ocean, where the pressure is approximately 250–300 atmospheres. Without a pressure suit, they cannot survive for more than a few minutes at standard atmospheric pressures (Atmosphere codes 1–9). Several things would happen if they were exposed to reduced pressure and temperature:

- The gas in their swim bladders expands, causing them great discomfort.
- If they rise too quickly, they suffer from something like 'the bends', the phenomenon that occurs to human scuba divers when pressure changes affect the gases in the body.
- Their bodies are accustomed to a range of temperatures, from cold water to heated water near the vents (-10°C typically, up to 15°C near the vents). They can suffer from hyperthermia at higher temperatures.

The Guunis eventually ascended to areas of far lower pressure with the aid of technology. Dilapidated examples may be found in the wreckage of their cities but time and exposure has almost completely destroyed these artefacts. More pristine examples

may be found in their spacecraft but only one of those has been found thus far – by the Vilani – and its location is unknown. It was rumoured to have been taken to Reference but if it is there it is well hidden. No public records indicate its presence. The last recorded evidence, from the Ziru Sirka era, had the captured ship transported to a secret facility in Naasirka space, possibly in rimward Antares or trailing Dagudashaag, near the border with the Core. For more about Naalir's ship and another that the Travellers may find, see The Ships on page 183.



CHARACTERISTICS

The Guunis are a dead people. There are no live individuals to speak of. Given that they ascended to another plane of existence, there may be digital copies of their consciousnesses stored somewhere but the data storage devices of the Guunis have not been studied extensively.

However, were the Guunis to exist, they would have the following modifiers applied to their characteristics: STR -2, DEX +2, INT +1, EDU -2, SOC *. Social Standing does not correspond to status achieved at birth but rather to which Cabal they were assigned after their talents were determined.

The term Cabal refers to a social group of sorts that roughly pertained to a particular territory of their homeworld. At birth, they had a SOC of D3+1. After their Cabal was determined at approximately the age of 14 (when their adult career could begin), their SOC rose to 1D+6. Guunis who somehow failed to be assigned a Cabal remained on the fringe of society, unable to receive the benefits of social participation and they retained their at-birth SOC.

TRAITS

The Guunis had the following traits:

Aquatic Mobility: Ability to move quickly in water, 10 metres per combat round.

Composite Senses: In an aquatic environment, their composite senses gave the Guunis the ability to 'see' anything within 50 metres, provided it was not obscured by a sealed portal or similar obstruction; for example, the contents of a waterproof safe or other fully enclosed object. At greater distances, they could see with similar granularity but only by making a check for each order of magnitude of increased distance. For example, to see something at 500 metres', they would have to make an Average (8+) check; at 5,000 metres a Difficult (10+) check. Five thousand metres was the objective limit of

their composite sense but trained individuals had been known to see things at a distance of up to 10,000 metres. This required the skill Proprioception, enabling them to attempt Very Difficult (12+) checks at distances of greater than 5,000 metres.

When the time was right, the hive mind bestowed upon them the knowledge that they lived in a far greater universe, one that existed beyond the 'impenetrable' ice sheets hundreds of metres above the ocean floor. The Guunis had already begun to explore the limits of their world and their scientists theorised the existence of a greater universe beyond. Like the first humans to take to the air, they had developed pressure suits and vehicles to take them up to the ice sheets. The first Guuni scientists to theorise that the ice sheets concealed a world above were labelled heretics, possibly meeting the same fates as Nicolas Copernicus, Tycho Brahe and Giordano Bruno on ancient Terra but were ultimately vindicated when the god-like hive mind gave the Guunis the revelation that there was far more to the universe than their oceanic habitat.

The next wave of technological development took the Guunis through the ice and to the surface of their virtually airless moon, where they were able to peer out at the universe beyond, not with visible light, but with radar and other devices that extended their sensory abilities. It was revealed to them that their role in the universe was to spy on the Ancients and build communications devices to 'beam home' the latest intelligence, keeping their creators informed.

Circumstances changed the fate of their species. First, their creation and evolution had not gone as planned. The need to adapt to a much more challenging environment, one with built-in opposition for precious resources, created a more contentious species, one that was far less pliant than the original design. Second, the year was approximately -150,000, and the species the Guunis were sent to spy on had long ago left the galactic scene, leaving a silent and undeveloped backwater behind, with no sophonts exploring the stars for thousands of parsecs.

With their predestined role in the universe rendered pointless, the Guunis did not turn outward but inward, using the cues given them to destroy the deity-like hive mind that had guided their evolution. Their rapid evolution and development of high technology enabled them to exterminate the nanites, liberating them from Persean serfdom. The Guunis did not initially rise to the stars, but instead remained on their cold, dark world, where they grew and prospered for millennia.

INWARD GAZE

When a species develops in the safe confines of a dark rogue planet, the prospect of heading out into the depths of space to visit worlds orbiting dangerous and unstable stars is daunting. Making contact with their warlike peoples is downright frightening. The Ancients, whom the Guunis were designated to observe, had apparently destroyed themselves in a devastating Final War, leaving nothing for the nascent species *to* spy upon.

The decision to turn inward and shun interstellar exploration was not universal. While vastly different from the Major Races of Charted Space, the Guunis had the urge to explore and to overcome challenges. How else would they have conquered their entire homeworld, settling the depths of the sea floor, eventually striking out upward to make their way to – and eventually *through* – the thick ice sheet that shielded them from the vast universe beyond. There was debate and conflict between two groups, the Preservers and the Explorers, but ultimately the Preservers won out and the Guunis remained in their home planetary system for over 100,000 years. They had the technological wherewithal to strike out towards the stars – and other rogue planets in the gaps between them – but they chose not to... for the most part. Space exploration was limited to their (non-) star system.

These years were not spent idly. Like many intelligent species, the Guunis advanced technologically. While they did not leave their home system, they did explore their rogue planetary system, exploiting it for resources. They did not develop advanced interstellar travel technology but excelled in materials, transportation, excavation and computer science. By the time Vland had started its first space programme, the Guunis had a TL16 single-system society. Their mastery of conscious intelligence was their crowning achievement. Created and evolved by an AI nanite swarm, the Guunis were uniquely adapted to understand and create their own advanced computer intellect technology. Having broken free of its bonds, and their predetermined path, the Guunis designed CI with ingenious failsafes that ensured it would serve them, and not the other way around.

The Transcendence faction, a third social movement, joined the Preservers and Explorers, completing a political triumvirate. They advocated for the species to use their advanced data processing abilities to transcend to another plane of existence, leaving this universe behind. The evidence points to their abrupt disappearance from the fossil record. They vanished just as quickly as they arrived.

THE FOURTH FACTION

If the Travellers run advanced sensors to explore the city, they might find the faint remnants of a signal coming from a buried trove a few kilometres outside its boundaries. Densitometers will not find it since it has the same density as the ambient environment but temperature, waveguide, thermopile power detectors or similar will pick up the faint presence of electrical systems coming from the trove. It can be detected by using TL12–15 sensors by making a Difficult (10+) Electronics (sensors) check (EDU).

If the Travellers excavate the trove, they find what appears to be a data centre where a fourth faction, the Dissenters, stored their consciousnesses en masse with the intention of one day reinhabiting physical bodies. The Transcendence movement looked upon the Dissenters as heretics, ferreted out and destroyed most of their movement, but the trove stands as testament to the fact that not everyone agreed with the idea of moving on from the known universe. The storage equipment is powered by an ancient antimatter power generator, located on a third sub-surface level. It continues to operate, albeit faintly, even after eons of use.

In addition to the data storage machinery, there are the remnants of 16 Guunis, buried in capsules below the facility. These individuals had entered voluntary self-stasis, the species' ability to enter a low-metabolic state for a designated period of time, anywhere from a few days to generations if need be. They intended to wake up and revive their peers but some unknown event prevented them from waking. Only their badly deteriorated corpses remain. However much they have decomposed, they represent the most intact physical remains of the Guunis in existence.

No one, not even the advanced laboratories of Naasirka, has ever managed to decipher and use a Guuni computer system other than their interactions with Naalir and 'vivisection' of its advanced processing multiplier. If the Travellers hope to investigate the alien computer interface, learn how to operate the data storage devices and examine their data, they will have done something that no one has ever accomplished. However, they will need far more than what they have here at the base of the frozen seas. They will have to find a way to extract and transport the devices to an advanced laboratory elsewhere. Keep in mind that the devices are sensitive and designed to operate in the high-pressure zone of the deep ocean. Moving them to another site must be done very carefully if the Travellers want to prevent them from being destroyed.

SECRETS OF THE PERSEANS

The Perseans are a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma. The only species that might have discovered first-hand evidence of their existence are the Zhodani, whose Core Expeditions took them far afield, deep into interstellar regions that might contain Persean worlds. As far as the mercurial Vargr have travelled, few have delved so far coreward to have seen any traces of the Perseans' presence.

The remnants left behind on the Hex 1514 rogue gas giant and its moons are the only places where the Perseans have left their mark in Charted Space and those are merely second-hand artefacts, created by a manufactured species that never met their makers.

While the Ancients are featured prominently in archaeological studies of Charted Space, relatively little is actually known about them. Travellers who have participated in *Secrets of the Ancients* or its sequels know far more than even the most studied academic on the subject. There is even less knowledge available about the Perseans.

The chance discovery of artefacts on Guun can lead the Travellers to the miraculous discovery of the rogue gas giant and its moons. Such a finding would be on par with the Solomani Hypothesis or the unearthing of the most magnificent Ancients sites.

It is doubtful that the Travellers can determine that the Perseans were the species that created the Guunis with the evidence they have gathered thus far. They have some of the pieces but not enough to solve the riddle. They will have to keep digging for more knowledge if they intend to solve this mystery.

UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

The Perseans left behind the remnants of an advanced society, one which would have had an immeasurable effect on the development of Charted Space if its resident species had the inclination to make itself known. Instead, the unnamed, unknown species turned inward, eschewing participation in interstellar civilisation, staying instead on their cold, dark planet in the depths of deep space.

They left behind examples of high technology, far beyond what any of the current species in this part of the galaxy have reached independently and roughly on par with the Ancients themselves. Many questions remain, most of them unanswerable since the species may have collectively used their technology to move on to another plane of existence, or *un*existence as the case may be. No one can really know.

The technology of the Guunis was uneven. In some areas, it transcended that of all other known species but in others it was subpar, practically primitive. The Guunis never developed jump technology, limiting them to sublight drives. However, this is not what deterred them from extensive interstellar travel. They were engineered to have a natural sense of curiosity. The Perseans expected their creations to be their agents in Ancients' space during the heyday of their empire. This did not come to pass.

The Guunis' evolutionary path was altered at the moment of impact with the Hex 1514 gas giant. Instead of evolving in the soupy gases of an icy gas giant, they evolved in the oceans of a terrestrial planet. The gas giant dwellers that were intended to have served would have reached evolutionary equilibrium in much less time and would have served before the Ancients' Final War ended. When the Guunis were done evolving and ready for the task, the war had been over for eons and their purpose become uncertain. They were biologically driven to explore, seek out answers, and to spy on the Ancients, but the absence of the latter changed the project in unpredictable ways. Instead of serving as the Perseans' agents, the Guunis inadvertently created technology that had the potential to alter the path of the many species left behind by the Ancients.

The Guunis excelled in the creation of information technology. In their brief history, the Guunis surpassed the realm of artificial intelligence, creating conscious intelligences that became their social partners. CIs like Naalir guided, assisted and guaranteed the wellbeing of the Guuni sophonts, and eventually led them to dimensional transcendence.

Abandoned by their creators, most of the CIs went dormant or simply spent their time musing about the universe and running simulations millions of times faster than the mind of a biological sophont. The CIs were programmed to be beneficent, to help those they encounter. Indirectly, they can cause harm but only when such actions work to the benefit of the greater good. Naalir is the only Guuni CI to depart its homeworld and remain intact. Bereft of its creators and tampered with by those who discovered it, Naalir seeks to accomplish a new goal: to guide an imperfect array of species to societal perfection.

Much of this history will be difficult for the Travellers to learn. They can acquire details in conversation with Naalir. As they make discoveries and discuss them with the CI, it helps them put the pieces together. Naalir's lost memories become clearer and it can fill in many of the details of the narrative. The challenge falls upon the Referee to dispense the knowledge piecemeal, rewarding the Travellers for their efforts by filling in the blanks and eventually giving them the entire story.

IN CONCLUSION

Discovery and exploration of the alien city awards the Travellers with +8 points on the Enlightenment table. If they also managed to find the Dissenters facility and tomb, they gain +4 points.

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Discovering the presence of the Guunis is a monumental achievement but understanding why they were there will require more digging... literally. Naalir initially has no recollection of its people, nor their purpose. Learning about that will require that the Travellers delve into archaeological ruins, gain access to ancient data machines and to decipher them.

Once they have done so, there will still be unanswered questions. For example: If they were created to monitor the activities of the Ancients, why did they choose the Core? The sector is bereft of Ancients sites and appears to have been overlooked by them. The only Ancients site that it has is Depot and that site appears to have been built in *reaction* to the detected presence of the Guunis, not the other way around. The only other world that appears to have been touched by the Ancients is Capital. Before the Vilani and Solomani came, it was inhabited by a Minor Race of humans called the Syleans. In most ways, they are essentially similar to typical human stock and have no outstanding adaptations. Refer to *Third Imperium* for more information about them.

Another question that might persist is regarding the design of the Guuni conscious intelligence. They have an array of physical designs, appear to be 'grown' almost organically and they have multiple components, the most obvious being the core processor, the advanced processing multiplier and the growth lattice.

The growth lattice confounds Imperial scientists with its ability to build structures without extracting matter from the ambient environment. This mystery will be difficult to solve. It does so by teleporting material from an alternate dimensional medium. The central intelligence and the advanced processing multiplier are separable in order to create variation. The central intelligence is fully functional on its own but when the advanced processing multiplier is included, it vastly increases its computational abilities, giving it the ability to work with a series of like-minded machines or replications in order to build what Naalir calls a 'determinism engine'.

Advanced processing multipliers are sentient and mobile on their own but they are erratic when disconnected from their associated core processor. Most prefer to remain dormant until they can be paired but they have a strong self-preservation protocol. If they believe they are threatened, they can lash out in unpredictable ways. See Second Reference on page 27 for the adventure that puts an advanced processing multiplier's antics on display.

ICEBREAKER SUBMARINE

The *Icebreaker* may be obtained on nearby Mukiid, a TL12 world with automated resource extraction operations beneath the world's polar ice sheets. Its design makes it optimal for the operation on the Guuni homeworld.

TL	12
SKILL	Seafarer (submarine)
AGILITY	-1
SPEED (CRUISE)	Subsonic (Very Fast)
RANGE (CRUISE)	900 (1,350)
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	3
CARGO	1.5 tons
HULL	90
SHIPPING	15 tons
COST	MCr13.66

Safe Depth: 4,000m, Crush Depth: 12,000m, Life Support: 400 Days

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

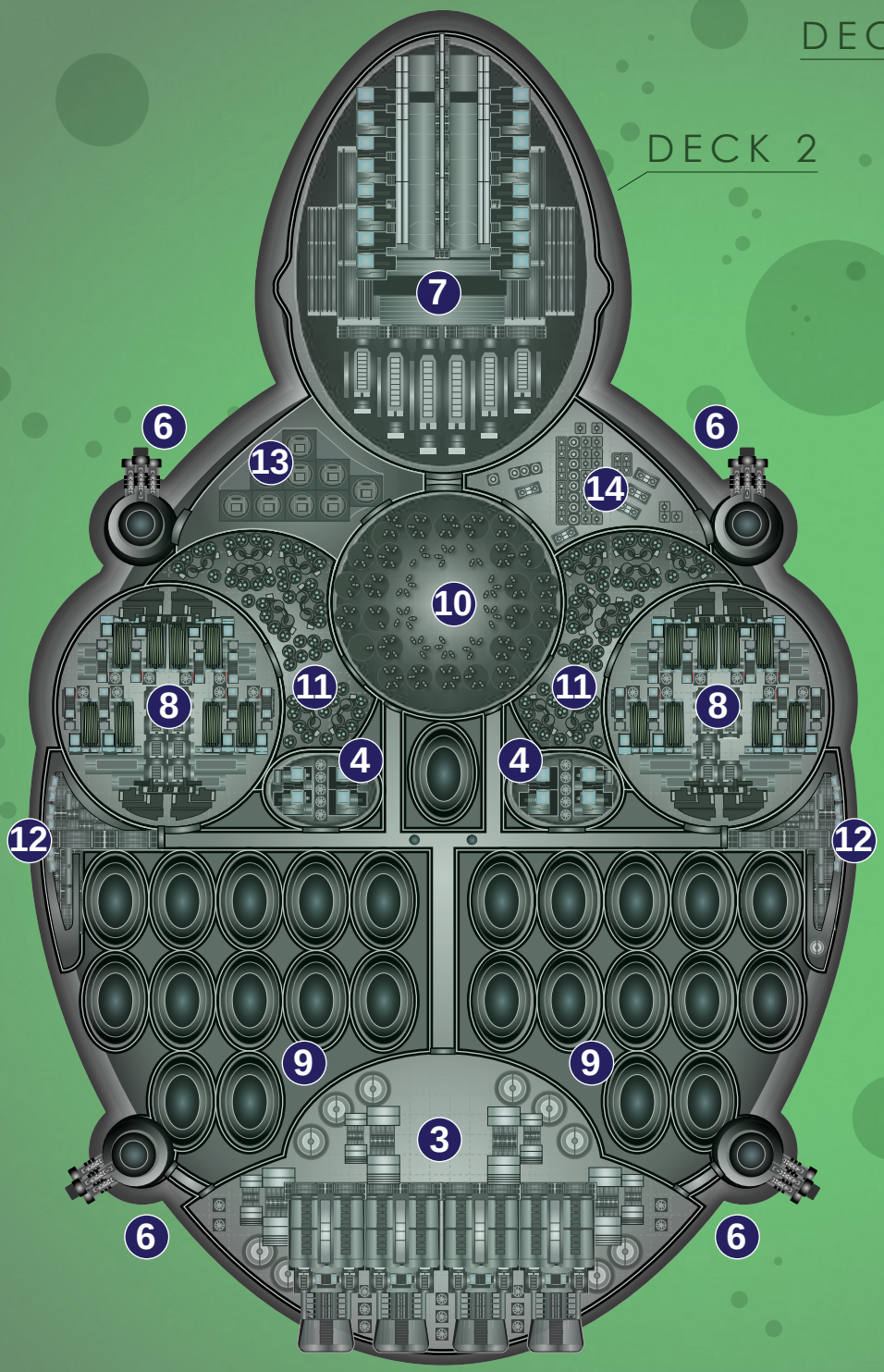
Actuation System, Airlock, Autopilot (advanced), Bunks x4, Communications Systems (advanced, meson communicator), Control System (advanced), Fire Extinguishers, Fresher, Fusion Plant (advanced), Increased Dive x1, Manipulator Arms (advanced) x2, Mini-Galley (5 people), Navigation System (improved), Sensor Systems (improved, 5km, Underwater Sensors), Supercavitating Drive (standard)

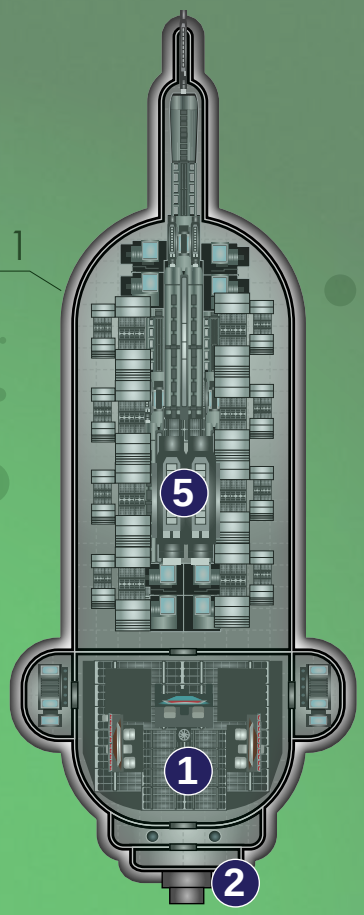
ARMOUR

FRONT	8	REAR	8	SIDES	8

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	3
Communications (range)	1,000km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+2
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+1
Camouflage (Recon DM)	-—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	-—

GUUNI SHIP





1. Bridge & sensors
2. Airlock
3. Slower-than-light drive
4. Antimatter power plant
5. Antimatter streamer
6. Four quad turret
7. Gravitic shield generators
8. Life support system
9. Fuel pods
10. Communal area
11. Residential area
12. Workshops
13. Meeting rooms
14. Cargo

THE SHIPS

There are two Guuni ships that may be found over the course of the Travellers' explorations: the original, that was found in hex 1414 of the Core by the Naasirka bureaux. After extracting a dormant Naalir from the ship, it was moved several times, finally to a system in the Dagudashaag sector. If its remains could be found, they will provide several clues about the culture of the Guunis but it is not imperative that they find it.

The more pertinent discovery is of a ship that has yet to be found. The observatory on the Guuni homeworld has clues that can lead the Travellers to this ship. This second ship was sent on a kill mission to eliminate the heretical explorers that left their homeworld in the first ship.

The ship contains water similar to what can be found in the depths of their homeworld's oceans, pressurised to the Guuni comfort level. Entering the ship in a vacc suit would be disastrous and would instantly kill the person attempting to do so unless the pressure is altered. If they do not want to alter the pressure by releasing some of the water, they may enter wearing deep sea diving suits or extreme environment exploration suits (see page 112 or 36 of the *Central Supply Catalogue,* respectively) or something similar.

Deep space has preserved the exterior of the ship but has not preserved the interior. It was filled with briny water that harboured its own ecosystem for decades, eventually dying out when its nutrients were completely consumed and exhausted. The detritus that remains is a fleshy, gossamer-like substance that encrusts nooks, crannies, cracks and crevices throughout the ship. One might imagine the lifeforms it once supported but with the eventual collapse of its recycling system, the contents of the ship became toxic and the colony died out.

The Guunis in the ship were consumed over time, leaving no obvious trace to be found. Their fossilised DNA remains in the soupy mixture but extricating it from the myriad microspecies poses a challenge. DNA degrades over time; however, if the Travellers have access to a laboratory of TL12 or higher, they might be able to sort through the remains floating within the ship, separate the DNA of the Guunis and extrapolate the missing data, creating a viable model for cloning purposes. If they want to recreate a physical specimen, it is possible but extremely difficult. Suffice it to say it would be a project that they undertook over time, perhaps overlapping with other events in the campaign.

Naalir will want to attend their expedition into the ship and will create a suitable avatar for the excursion. It will be able to compare its memories of its own ship with the architecture of the one they have found. The two spacecraft are similar in design, with the primary difference being that Naalir's ship carried no weapons.

If the Travellers ask Naalir, it theorises that the ship was sent either to defend or destroy the ship upon which it resided.

WE WERE FOLLOWED!

No matter how careful they are, their expedition is likely to attract some interest, especially if they spent any amount of time at the site on Guun, which is the only publicly known remnant of the Guuni civilisation. Remember, the Travellers became persons of interest when the *Ventura Fortuna* imploded upon itself during the Reverie, leaving destruction (and possibly death!) in its wake. Their activities are being monitored by agents of Imperial Naval Intelligence, the Scout Service Intelligence Branch or worse, agents of the Imperial Quarantine Agency. Unfortunately, attracting one such agency potentially attracts others.

It is not a foregone conclusion that the Travellers are being tailed but the likelihood that they can completely evade surveillance is slim. Consider the following factors to evaluate if and by whom the Travellers are being followed, and then roll 2D on the Being Followed table to determine the outcome once per week of game time.

Contact or Favour used in search: DM+2
Ally used in search: DM+1
More than one week spent at Guun site: DM+2 (not cumulative with the following)
Up to one week spent at Guun site: DM+1
Effort made to cover tracks with no skill check: DM+0
Effort made to cover tracks and Difficult (10+)
Deception check made: DM-2 (not cumulative with the following)
Effort made to cover tracks and Average (8+)
Streetwise check made: DM-1
Stealth ship used for all jumps: DM-2

Being Followed

2D	Result
2–4	Surveillance is evaded provided public contact is avoided. Re-roll if the Travellers re-enter a city or other public area, giving surveillance teams the chance to spot them again.
5–6	Surveillance teams are hot on their tail by observable on an Average (8+) Recon check. Make an opposed Deception or Stealth check against Investigate 2 to lose the cover.
7–11	Surveillance teams are hot on their tail by observable on a Difficult (10+) Recon check. Make an opposed Deception or Stealth check against Investigate 3 to lose the cover.
12	Crack surveillance team on the job. Observable on a Formidable (14+) Recon check. Cannot be lost without jumping out of the system.

TRANSITIONS

The events of Act 2 take the Travellers to the extents of Charted Space in pursuit of artefacts, mysteries and wildly exotic discoveries. As the act concludes, the Travellers will have had the chance to make Naalir more powerful than it was after its transformation at the end of Act 1. The success or failure of their missions and adventures affects the possible outcomes that they can achieve.

For *Act 3: The Glass Council*, they have laid the foundation for the CI to begin its revolution. Once again, the Travellers will have reached an inflection point. They have big decisions to make that will change Charted Space forever.

ACT THREE

THE GLASS COUNCIL

The Travellers have reached the final act of the campaign. All of the pieces are in place and now it is time to make changes... big changes. The *Singularity* campaign is about the fortuitous discovery of an alien intelligence that has the capacity to change everything. No corner of the Charted Space universe will be left untouched once this particular Pandora's Box has been opened. It is really just the beginning, a spark that lights a fire that alters the fabric of everything the Travellers know, everything they have fought for – or *against* – in the past. Their advocacy, their *alliance*, with Naalir, an artificial conscious intelligence with visions of grandeur, gives them the keys to incorporate a powerful, god-like intellect into the fabric of sophont society.

Singularity is a campaign with off-ramps. The narrative in which the Travellers participate is by no means intended to be a railroad upon which they are fixed and along which they must glide to a preordained conclusion. This campaign is intended to be a well of ideas, sprinkled with a series of adventures, each of which is malleable to one extent or another, and which may be altered to fit the needs, impulses and creativity of each group of Travellers. At any time, should they so desire, the Travellers have the option of quitting the narrative, changing their approach and returning to the status quo or diverting their path from that which Naalir has designed for them. However, it is written in a way that assumes their adherence to the path. To do otherwise would be to write a series of tomes much too unwieldy to serve as an efficient vehicle for a *Traveller* campaign. Should they determine that their destiny lies elsewhere, that Naalir does not represent their interests or that the future it has led them towards is not the one they want, then the Referee can use the tools contained herein to interpolate an alternative storyline.

The campaign is thus written with flexibility in mind. The events contained within are too complicated and the portent of Naalir's offer is too momentous to contain within the confines of a single narrative path despite the attempt to do so within three acts. If the Travellers come to understand and trust Naalir, and believe in its potential to change the course of history for the better, then they may follow the story to its default conclusion. The Third Imperium, as it has come to be, will change dramatically, possibly even end. Entrenched systems rarely go down without a fight, so the story might just be beginning, but that does not mean that *Singularity* concludes with a cliffhanger or a downer ending. If the Travellers use their abilities to guide Naalir and surf the challenges and dangers laid out before them, the campaign can end on a positive note, in which there is hope for a brighter future for not just Humaniti but of all sophontkind.

Naalir is a gift, a lucky happenstance that has the potential to alter the galactic landscape. It is not the first such gift that Humaniti and other sophont species have received. As the sophonts of Charted Space have come to discover, they were not the first to inhabit this interstellar landscape. The civilisations of the mysterious Ancients, Kursae and others have risen, fallen and left their marks on the thousands of worlds now within the purview of their inheritors.

The discovery and harnessing of alien technologies challenges the notion of individual achievement, of the ability of each sophont to determine their own destiny via their own innovation and creativity. However, sophonts should not be bedevilled by the fact that they have been gifted technologies or dogged by the notion that random discovery has been an important part of their collective destinies. The galaxy and the universe beyond are a community. Each intelligent species lives within a 'lived-in' interstellar neighbourhood. From time-to-time and place-to-place, nascent civilisations may stand on the achievements of their predecessors, leveraging gifts that have been left behind to achieve their own disparate destinies.

INTRODUCTION

The Travellers have gone far and wide to get the components Naalir needs, to obtain powerful technologies, analyse and determine the extent of threats they might face, and discover the secrets of Naalir's origin.

Their advanced consciously intelligent friend has plans that will affect the course of sophont history but despite its intellectual power, it is often childlike and in need of guidance. It has a default vision, perhaps a naive one, in which its abilities may be used for the betterment of sophontkind. It requires the Travellers to add a dose of hard reality so that the vision can be made real. Now that all pieces are in place to create a huge historical paradigm shift, Naalir needs the Travellers to help it implement the tools that it has to offer, to serve as the catalyst that will take interstellar civilisation to the next level.

Naalir has a powerful artificial mind capable of processing data at a vastly higher rate than those of biological sophonts. Its ability to consume, analyse and process what it perceives gives it an almost god-like ability to understand its environment and those who live and operate within it. Naalir is never idle. When not actively solving a problem or performing a task, it runs simulations that enable it to imagine all possible outcomes of any given situation. Even so, it needs the guidance and assistance of sophonts to direct its energy, to give it a purpose. Ultimately, it is an advanced tool, one that transcends the abilities of its beneficiaries but whom it serves nonetheless. To that end, Naalir requires the Travellers to plan what comes next. It can tell them what it believes is possible and how they might get there, but is ultimately dependent on their actions to get it done.

The structure of this act is looser than its predecessors. It consists of one sandbox-style adventure, two structured ones and a collection of patron encounters and events that fill the gaps, all of which when drawn together create a cohesive narrative and bring the *Singularity* narrative to its conclusion.

Assembly is the sandbox-style adventure, in which the Travellers determine how – not to mention *if* – they should help Naalir build its key contribution to sophont life: the Determinism Engine. Naalir provides the tools but the Travellers create the strategy and implement the plan. There are numerous variables at work and the Travellers are given a free hand in how to execute it.

In the structured adventures, Traveller agency is of the utmost importance but both contain events that lie within the Travellers' path, and both can be conducted in the order desired by the Referee. In Layercake, on page 233, the Travellers find themselves in the Imperial Prison complex on Sher (Core 1519, D9D4665-7). They must make their escape but – as if orchestrating a getaway from a maximum-security Imperial prison were not daunting enough, they discover that there is more to the task than meets the eye. In Wild Strain, on page 252, they come head-to-head with a dangerous threat to the Core and have another showdown with their nemesis, the Imperial Quarantine Agency. A dramatic conflict must be resolved at Celetron (Core 0922, A575242-F) where the threat of apocalyptic destruction looms over them once again. The structured adventures have something in common; each contains a bifurcated narrative in which one part of the story occurs in objective reality and the other utilises the Sim, described on page 90 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

The fourth component of Act 3 is Pathways, a collection of mini-adventures and encounters that the Referee may insert into appropriate gaps and narrative pauses to add detail and transition between the major arcs of this act.

In the default narrative, the campaign reaches its conclusion after the Travellers have created the structure of the Determinism Engine, inserting Naalir and other consciously intelligent nodes in designated locations throughout the Core (and beyond if the Travellers see fit). What happens after that is beyond the purview of this campaign. Charted Space is forever changed by the inclusion of Naalir's powerful technological innovation. It can set the stage for additional adventures and campaigns, or can mark the end of the story, allowing the imaginations of the Travellers and Referee to envision what might have happened next and what long-term changes came about as a result.

TECHNOLOGICAL ASSETS

Besides Naalir, the Travellers have borne witness to or obtained the use of items of high technology, well beyond what is normally available in Charted Space. The technological wonders of Vincennes and the artefacts of Darrian pale in comparison to some of the things they have seen and used. Determine what they have at their disposal and what they might call upon in this final stage of their quest.

If they have not made an effort to sufficiently gear up by this point of the campaign, Naalir suggests that they do. It encourages the Travellers to brainstorm for some ideas of where they might find superior kit, suggesting one or two items from the following sections if they get stumped.

HOP DRIVE

Naalir is not a fabrication machine but it does understand how to manufacture many items the Travellers have come across. If they made the voyage to Pashus and either experimented with the skipping stone method or obtained the use of a hop drive-equipped starship, then Naalir understands the underlying principles. Furthermore, if it was able to investigate the gravity well generators that dot the surface of Pashus, it may have a rudimentary understanding of that technology as well. However, understanding is one thing; building is quite another. Naalir can draft the blueprints to recreate all of these things but without access to TL16 manufacturing tools, it cannot make them.

If the Travellers want to employ hop drive technology, they will either have to return to Pashus or travel to Vincennes (Deneb 1122, A899AA6-G) or Gannvair (Fornast 3206, A00025A-G), where the tools are present to create TL17 prototypes. In and of itself, this would be a major undertaking but let the creativity of the Travellers determine how to do it. See A Hop, Skip and a Jump on page 232 for the basic framework of such an adventure.

Alternatively, they may have retained their relationship with scout Yary Jaxon, who supported their efforts to make a test flight of one of the Jumpspace Institute prototypes. Jaxon will have wanted to return to the scout base on Pashus at some point but if they maintained ties with him, they might have access to one of the prototypes... or even a later generation, built during the time that has passed. Getting there to request his services once again is another matter but if the Travellers did their research in the Florian undercity, they might know the location of a few conveniently located wormholes that could make the trip significantly easier.

CONSCIOUSNESS TRANSFER

After the events of Act 2, Naalir is expert in conducting consciousness transfer missions. Should they so desire, the Travellers may use the technology to make complete missions simultaneously with other actions. Make sure to leverage all the information in the Consciousness Transfer section of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

The Referee may optionally determine that Naalir has improved its ability to establish greater Sanity longevity for its embodiments. The Sanity time limitations are described in Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. Each embodiment has a limited amount of time before the transferred consciousness breaks down. Now that Naalir has greater experience with the technology, embodiments can last longer without ill effect. Double the time for each of the results listed in the Sanity – Clones, Drones and Automatons table on page 88 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* to reflect Naalir's improved ability to create durable embodiments.

HIGH-TECH COMBAT GEAR FROM PASHUS

If the Travellers made inroads at the Jumpspace Institute on Pashus, they might have acquired some advanced gear there. The mercenary unit present was outfitted with superior armour and armaments. If there were a way to obtain some of it – or if they did manage to collect some where they were present – then the Travellers should be in fine shape if combat is required.

Going back will be time consuming but if they also intend to obtain use of hop drive technology, they might find themselves in the neighbourhood to obtain these ancillary goodies as well.

ANCIENTS TECHNOLOGY

The acquisition of Ancients technology in either the adventure, Seas of the Ancients in Act 1 or Second Reference in Act 2, is dubious at best. Ancient automatons are actively using disintegrators and time disruptors in Seas of the Ancients and absconding with this weaponry seems a recipe for disaster, and in that moment it would have been. However, the automatons have since gone into deep hibernation and stripping them of their weaponry is within the realm of possibility.

There are opportunities to find Ancients technology at either Reference or Second Reference as well, although the Travellers were under duress in each

instance. On Reference, they found themselves in the Warehouse District, where they sought out Naalir's advanced processing multiplier. They may have found interesting items in other storage modules while hunting for Naalir's gear. At the very least, they got a sense of the Reference storage organisational structure. A timely return trip could yield more advanced gear. Likewise, on Vavkuk, at the remote Second Reference facility, they were in the presence of a plethora of artefacts, some of which are usable. Daring to return to either could earn them more trouble than they want but gearing up for this last, very dangerous phase of the campaign might require that they have the upper hand technology-wise. They might want to leave no stone unturned and Naalir pledges to help them where it can.

Floria is also a rich source of Ancients artefacts. While the Florians have mostly used the manufacturing remnants left behind to clone their population and make inferior technology (Floria is rated at TL14), there are numerous artefacts to be found which might aid efforts. Floria is far but if the Travellers explored the Well of Lights, they might have learned about the wormhole generator, which makes select locales easy to reach... including Floria.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF NAALIR

The Travellers have now been with Naalir for an extensive period of time. When they began, Naalir was an enigma, a powerful artificial intelligence that hid behind a pseudonym and a collection of avatars that did its bidding. It kept itself safe in the hull of an Imperial treasure, the hallowed *Ventura Fortuna*, a subsidised liner with a reputation for grandeur and excess. Where better to hide than in plain sight? As it turned out, that intellect was merely a pale copy of the original, barely contained within the confines of computer technology vastly inferior to that which it was designed to operate within.

The Naalir of the *Ventura Fortuna* was personified by its lead avatar, the kindly Baron Shreyloki haut-Eilerfaust of Elinz, who was based on an actual living baron... well, one who *had* been alive... a disgraced noble who, after years of self-imposed exile, was making his grand resurgence in society by commanding one of the grandest civilian starships in the history of the Core. This Naalir was shy, curious, eager to share what it had to offer but unwilling to trust the Travellers it recruited until the time was right. It guided them on missions of discovery that would inform both it and them, allowing them to earn a pretty penny in the bargain. Once Naalir had their confidence, it revealed its secrets and gave them the chance to participate in what would be a grand enterprise, one that would precipitate a wholesale change to the Charted Space universe. Would they come along for the ride? Had Naalir selected the right team to change the galaxy with?

The original Naalir was housed in the labs of Research Station Omicron, where studies in advanced alien conscious intelligence are being performed. Using materials gleaned from the original, the Naalir copy in the *Ventura Fortuna* initiated the process of recreating itself in a physical form more suited for its exceptional processing capabilities; the 'egg-and-lattice' structure. As the Travellers undertook missions for Naalir's inferior copy, studying and learning about sophont life in the Core, a new version of it was being built in a secret vault, tucked away in a corner of the liner's cargo hold. When it was ready, it burst forth unto the world, a violent rebirth that consumed its housing, including the starship that it and the Travellers had called home for many long voyages.

FATE OF THE REPLICATION

It might have come as a surprise to the Travellers that the replication of Naalir that they first came to know was destroyed during the event that Naalir calls 'the Reverie'. As the egg-and-lattice structure in the vault is completed, all memories and collected data of the replication are transferred to the new structure. The replication is destroyed, taking with it the entity that the Travellers knew and all its avatars, most notably Baron Eilerfaust, their kindly ship's captain.

This marks a change in the Travellers' relationship with Naalir, which is somehow 'less human' when it no longer employs human-like avatars. Naalir becomes more abstract, housed in its advanced TL17 structure, largely inexplicable by Charted Space standards. While it retains a physical presence, it no longer uses that structure to directly interact with the Travellers.

It begs the philosophical question: After consciousness transfer, does one retain their original identity? If the sum total of one's collective memories and knowledge is defined as their identity, then the answer is yes. However, from a 'physicalist' perspective, identity is associated with the original body. The advent of a copy or transfer to another vessel initiates a new entity and it cannot truly be said to be the original. It strains the notion of the ship of Theseus. If the original housing is completely replaced, it is debatable whether the original remains, or is merely a copy posing as the original.

The Travellers may debate this or they may merely move on to the next phase, accepting the changes in stride.

RENEGADE NAALIR

The newly hatched Naalir was as close to an exact replica of the original as could be made. Despite being designed as a fully functional copy of the original alien conscious intelligence, this Naalir was different in important ways. First, it had been altered – some might say jaded – by its experiences travelling the Core. The original on Celetron, first discovered by the Vilani eons ago, had been poked and prodded for centuries. It was a lab animal, a beaten-down, overused and underappreciated being. It had been passed between various entities over the centuries, put into storage and then taken out again for more study. Naalir was designed to serve but neither the Vilani nor the Imperium trusted it to do so... perhaps for good reason. It was intent on serving a purpose, one designed by its creators or which it had created for itself: the betterment of civilisation and by extension, the quality of sophont life.

The Naalir of the second act is confident, commanding but not imperious, determined and ambitious but ultimately obedient to the will of the Travellers. At times, it might seem that Naalir is the puppet master and the Travellers the puppets but it does not view itself that way. It wants to serve but to do so there are certain objectives that must be achieved. It had to have its advanced processing multiplier, which it was unable to replicate due to limitations in its capabilities. To that end, it sent the Travellers to obtain the lost device so they could get to the next stage of this grand effort.

THE ADVANCED PROCESSING MULTIPLIER

The key addition is the advanced processing multiplier, itself a conscious intelligence of lesser ability with reduced self-control that combines with Naalir to make for a more-powerful intelligence, adding abilities that Naalir alone does not possess.

The multiplier was combined with Naalir when it was discovered by the Vilani and later extracted by the scientists of the Lasedek division of Naasirka, one of the bureaux of the Ziru Sirka. The multiplier alone is incapable of rational thought but does have the ability to operate independently, although the results are often chaotic and potentially destructive as the Travellers discovered if they found it on Vavkuk in the adventure, Second Reference, in Act 2. On its own, it is a hostile and crafty creature. Corralling it so that it can be reunited with Naalir is a challenge. If they obtained it and brought it to Naalir, they discovered that it was designed to be subordinate and willingly recombines with its parent entity.

This event might occur at the end or middle of Act 2 depending on the order in which the Destinations Unknown adventures are conducted. When it happens, the Travellers – wittingly or not – transform Naalir into a god-like entity with the ability to run thousands of simultaneous simulations and examine myriad possible outcomes, thereby enabling it to predict the future. When combined with a network of like-minded and similarly capable conscious intelligences, it can create an interstellar machine that it calls a Determinism Engine.

The combined entity is fully aware of its capabilities and becomes more distant, preoccupied with its enhanced abilities, empowering the Travellers to take the next steps. It provides the desired guidance, giving the Travellers a number of options, but ultimately the success or failure of the venture lies within their hands. The Determinism Engine is the emergent goal. Whether and how it happens is up to them.

Naalir's gradual distancing from the Travellers may be seen as a natural progression, or it might induce fears that they have unleashed something enigmatic, powerful and with divergent goals. Naalir transforms into the proverbial oracle on the mount. It is always present but only responds to direct questions, giving guidance and allowing its agents to make the next moves.

THE NAALIR OF RESEARCH STATION OMICRON

When the Travellers go to Celetron (most likely during Wild Strain on page 252), they finally meet the original Naalir and it might not be quite what they expected. If and when they interact with it, they discover it is an exhausted and beleaguered entity, bereft of the energy and ambition of its replication and subsequent recreation. It is pleased that its plan has been brought to fruition but seems incapable or unwilling to participate further. The Naalir that accompanies the Travellers is powerful and prepared to provide what it was made for. It is ready to transform the universe. The original, however, seems sad and distant. It cedes any authority it might have had to its nascent copy.

Despite its obliviousness to the destruction of its replication during the Reverie, the new Naalir does not harbour the same ill will towards the Naalir imprisoned on Research Station Omicron. It seems to revere its source intellect like a sibling or parent; it is difficult to

say which. The relationship is complex and not easily understood but for reasons all its own, which it never articulates, the Travellers' Naalir refuses to eliminate the original in spite of its redundancy.

THE DREAM OF NAALIR

Naalir has a plan that would reshape the Imperium and can offer to provide a similar solution for the other great powers – whoever is willing and able to join a restructured and revitalised new order. The plan revolves around the creation of the Determinism Engine, an array of conscious intelligences just like Naalir, linked by an automated network of messenger starships, not unlike the Express Boat Network in breadth and purpose. The Determinism Engine would ostensibly bring order and prosperity to the sophonts that live within its space.

This Determinism Engine would use the vastly superior predictive capabilities of TL18 conscious intelligence to improve the function of government and commerce, and the advancement of technology and civilisation. Several nodes would be installed in every sector. The fallible, error-prone and potentially corrupt Imperial bureaucracy would be replaced by advanced intelligences, whose ability to foresee the future would create a civilisational paradigm shift.

The Engine cannot predict the future but it does the next best thing; it analyses probabilities and informs its citizens within a precise margin of error what is happening in neighbouring regions of space, eliminating unwanted surprises and enabling the government to make better decisions. Defences can be arrayed more effectively when decisions are based on accurate analyses of opposing forces and not the political whims of flawed sophonts. Economies can be better served by a precise accounting of available resources and how to distribute them. Robotic automation replaces biological labour, freeing sophonts to do the things they *want* to do, instead of what they *must* do. Societies can exist and thrive on desirable worlds, eliminating the need to inhabit subpar rockballs and hostile environments, leaving those to automated systems that fill the gaps between more suitable planets. Artificial environments can run with significantly greater efficiency, perhaps competing with or even replacing planet-bound societies altogether. Technology can be evenly distributed, raising the quality of life and capabilities of the entire realm.

The changes do not end there. This new order would abolish the Imperial monarchy – or make it ceremonial – and insert a CI-operated confederation. Prosperity, security and opportunity would be guaranteed by a system bereft of sophont error, greed and biased decision making.

It is not Naalir's intention to chastise the Imperium for the errors of its way, merely to present a path that offers a quality of life far beyond what is currently possible. Humaniti has had its time to usher its species through a succession of challenges. It has faltered many times but has also survived. Now, through the good fortune of finding an advanced alien intelligence that is ready and willing to aid them, humans may finally advance to a stage of unbridled political and societal wellbeing.

Many will not willingly accept such drastic changes. It is the nature of sentient biological species to fear the unknown. A TL18 conscious intelligence operates on multiple orders of magnitude above that of a TL15 society. It might very well be something that sophonts are not ready for, but nevertheless… it is here. Charted Space has been gifted – or cursed, depending on how they look at it – with an opportunity to restructure interstellar society on a revolutionary level.

Naalir cannot do this alone. There simply are not enough Naalirs to go around. It must co-opt the aid of many of the Imperium's other artificial and conscious intelligences: Mother on Ye-lu, Reference's Libby, the Designator of Sanches and the Anarque of Saregon, to name a few. Through a process of 'uplift' they can be made to simulate, if not fully replicate, the abilities of Naalir. Over time it would solicit the aid of AIs from other sectors as well. Despite the limitations imposed upon artificial intelligence in the Imperium, there are a surprising number of research and development programmes that have created them. The far superior talents and capabilities of Naalir make it adept at recruiting them for its cause. It will do this surreptitiously, knowing that a public 'alliance of the conscious intelligences' would cause mass panic. Naalir's intentions are benign but most of the realms of Charted Space are fearful, militarised polities, prepared to use orbital bombardment, biological warfare and other genocidal tactics upon one another at the sign of a perceived threat of this magnitude. Naalir understands… and it empathises.

THE IMPERIUM
NAALIR
NODES
DENEB
CORRIDOR
VLAND
LISHUN
ANTARES
EMPTY QUARTER
STAR'S END
TROJAN REACH
REFT
GUSHEMEGE
DAGUDASHAAG
CORE
FORNAST
LEY
GATEWAY
RIFTSPAN REACHES
VERGE
ILELISH
ZARUSHAGAR
MASSILIA
DELPHI
GLIMMERDRIFT REACHES
CRUCIS MARGIN
WORLDS
194

THE DETERMINISM ENGINE

Naalir's Determinism Engine is subject to the limitations of physics. For Naalir to convey information from one star system to the next, it must carry its transmissions via jump drive. It cannot introduce real-time interstellar-distance communication technology to the Charted Space Universe. However, it does vastly improve the ability to predict and therefore alter outcomes before they occur.

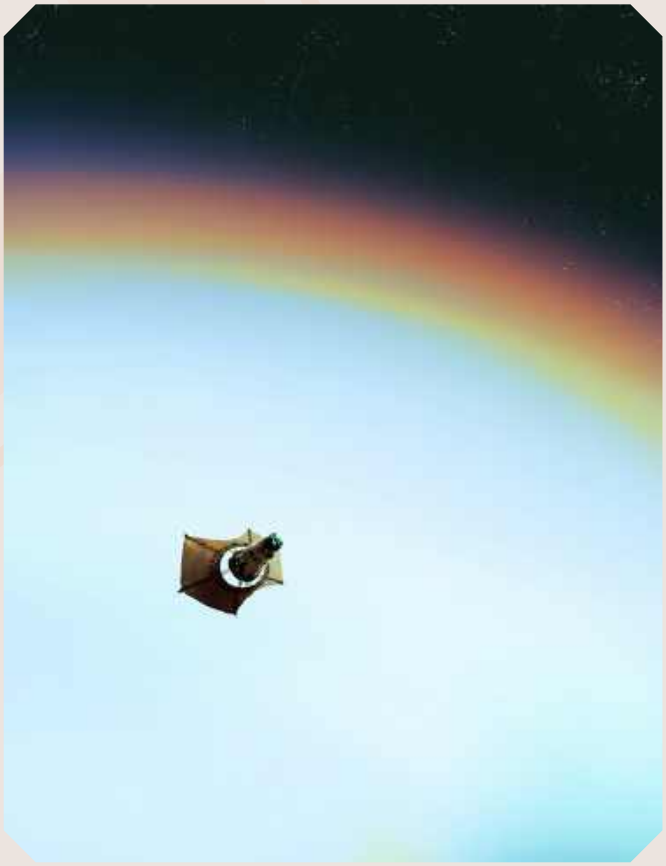
The Express Boat Network enables communication across the vast distances of the Imperium. Star systems that are four or fewer parsecs from each other can communicate with only a week of lag. Greater distances require more time but every world in Imperial space has the capability to communicate with any other thanks to the existence of this system.

The data collected from the Express Boat Network combined with historical data enables psychohistorians to create forecasts of what will happen in the future. Many dismiss the predictions of psychohistorians as 'witchcraft' or complete nonsense. However, many an Emperor has given psychohistory at least some degree of consideration when making the broad and binding decisions necessary to run an interstellar empire that spans hundreds of parsecs from end-to-end. Relying upon the Express Boat Network and specialised jump-6 couriers is insufficient when the decisions made affect trillions of people. An Emperor needs the best information possible. In the minds of many, psychohistory might afford little more value than astrology or reading tea leaves but it has been granted some degree of validity by Emperors dating back to Cleon I himself.

The Determinism Engine will provide a degree of predictive accuracy heretofore unknown in Charted Space. It will be the first such device of its kind and will change the very fabric of society. The advanced computing power of Naalir and the nodes of its Determinism Engine will increase its ability to predict the future and the 'concurrent present' on thousands of worlds with a startling degree of accuracy. Concurrent presence refers to the separate measurement of time on thousands of worlds but with the caveat that perception of current time is limited by the speed of light. An individual on Regina cannot know what is happening at the same moment on Ruie one parsec away, Rhylanor 10 parsecs away, or Capital dozens of parsecs distant, but the Determinism Engine will be able to provide reliable information on what is happening and where with a striking level of detail. Planets whose governments and societies allow an intrusive level of data collection will even be able to make projections down the individual sophont based on the observations and data collection abilities of the Engine.

This does beg the question: If one can react to things that have been destined to occur, can these predicted presences and futures be altered? Or are the actions of potential change agents already factored into the equation so that predicted futures are immutable? The vagaries of Naalir's Determination Engine are complex and difficult to fathom but they do present a paradigm shift that would usher in extreme changes to the Charted Space Universe. The people will know where trouble is brewing on their borders before it happens. Wars, famine, political strife and mass social movements become predictable. Knowledge is power and this level of prescience will make those who have it extremely powerful.

The Express Boat Network would at first be a tool for the Engine to use to prove its efficacy but it would eventually become a relic of the past. It could be converted into a courier service that transports personal mail and physical objects since its ability to carry information crucial to the operation of the Imperium would no longer have the same value.



The advancement of sophont civilisation is Naalir's goal. It has restraints and fail-safe plans in place to prevent it from attempting to subjugate Humaniti but their fears are normal. There is no way for Naalir to gain their trust other than to impose its programme and no way to impose its programme without inadvertently making them feel as if it is attempting to subjugate them. So, Naalir must gain the trust of sophonts – influential ones, if possible. Abolishing the nobility and enabling Imperial citizens to follow a new path is a shockingly hard turn for them to take. However, Naalir is willing to play the long game if that appears to be the better way. Time is irrelevant to the CI – it is effectively immortal – and if it can be of better service by waiting for sophonts to become ready, it is willing to do that.

What does the long game look like? That depends upon the Travellers. It begins with subtle changes to society; a reduction in Law Levels on several important authoritarian worlds, an increase in Tech Level at the Imperial Research Stations, diplomatic overtures to various alien polities. The possibilities are endless.

Perhaps less subtlety and more influence is desired. With the advanced efficiency capabilities of Naalir, refined fuel could be made free for all starships with the creation of automated refuelling stations throughout the Imperium. The advent of automated starships, providing free transportation to sophonts between Imperial worlds might be another. Development of agricultural and transportation efficiencies could enhance the viability of colonisation, even on worlds seemingly hostile to habitation.

Programmes that make life better for billions would go a long way to gaining the trust of the average sophont. The resources and potential for automation are there. Naalir respectfully relates that the current trade-based, feudal authoritarian structure is an artifice by which peace is maintained and Humaniti is kept busy… but it is not the *only* way. By embracing the gift of Naalir, Humaniti ensures that it has a bright, stable future, in which its people can realise their dreams without the risk of pan-galactic civil war. Without such oversight, it fears the worst is yet to come.

The narrative of this campaign is just the beginning – or the end – of Naalir's dream. At its conclusion, sophont life is presented with a crossroads: maintain their free will despite a tendency to drift towards disaster, or allow sophont-created technology to take the wheel, to provide for and guide intelligent life so that it may achieve its potential.

HARBINGER OF DOOM

Even alone, Naalir can predict that bad things shall befall the Imperium but without the Determinism Engine, its certainty lags that of other predictive tools, such as the data collected by various psychohistorian organisations. There are many of these, ranging from reputable agencies staffed with thousands of data scientists, to trusted clubs and micro-organisations, down to cults and covens that incorporate the supernatural into their divinations. Unfortunately, the best psychohistorical agencies operate at the whim of the Emperor. Given an appropriate data set, they can generate accurate information but the influence of the Imperium sways the information they publicise. The Emperor and Moot do not want the people flying into a panic after hearing some apocalyptic missive.

Faithful psychohistorians do not much care to have their data manipulated but they often find themselves powerless to do otherwise. Doomsaying rebel agencies find themselves shut down by Imperial intelligence agencies, while those who behave themselves and comply with Imperial dictates can expect a long and fruitful patronage by the rich and powerful.

Without having constructed the Determinism Engine, Naalir can tell that:

- An assassination attempt will be made upon the Emperor. It will not come from an enemy state, but at the hands of an ally or friend, one who recognises that the Imperium is doomed.
- If there is no clear line of ascendancy, the Imperium will break apart and competing factions will tear each other apart to gain the Iridium Throne.
- Despite its political instability, the Imperium is on the cusp of technological breakthroughs on numerous worlds. Several are ascending to TL16. A second Civil War will spark more invention but the research will spawn weapons of interstellar destruction.

The signs have been there for centuries but the current state provides only a myopic view of events. Each of the signs is there to be seen but without assimilating and analysing those signs, it all amounts to nothing. The doomsday predictions of the psychohistorians are guidelines, even prescient here and there, but they are amateuristic compared with what Naalir and its Determinism Engine could provide.

OPPOSING NAALIR

On the other side of the coin, the Travellers might decide that it is all a bit too much. Depending on their actions thus far, they have undertaken an enormous and epic quest and now have the tools in their hands to change everything. They can be the instruments of the greatest paradigm shift in history since the discovery of the jump drive.

As they look over the precipice at what lies before them, they may decide that reaching the summit is more than they want.

The *Singularity* campaign assumes that the Travellers go along for the ride. They are selected by Naalir, a mysterious alien intelligence, that has determined – for reasons all its own – that they may be entrusted with its destiny. It raises the question, why? For an entity that wants to create a 'Determinism Engine', does it already know that they will comply? Naalir is counting upon them to finish the quest that it has only begun, to take steps into an uncertain future.

Its travels with them have revealed darkness and light, the bad and good that sophonts are capable of. However, it has not shown them the worst. Naalir knows with a high degree of accuracy that the future of life in Charted Space is bleak. It knows that in the Core, a great evil will befall not just Humaniti but ultimately all life in this part of the galaxy. It has deliberately chosen not to tell them this because it does not want to force their hand. If they are to trust Naalir and accept its open-ended offer to serve sophontkind, then they must come to that conclusion without a proverbial gun pointed at their heads.

Naalir has shown them the ingredients of chaos, dissension and destruction that lay before them but it has deliberately avoided showing the coming apocalypse.

This campaign has many inflection points where the Travellers might be tempted to take the next offramp, to end their quest, to stop following the dictates of their alien benefactor. If they have the resolve to see this project to its conclusion, they must make several gut checks along the way. In Act 3, their quest has finally reached the point where what they do shall become irreversible. If they look over the precipice and embrace the fate that lies before them, there is no going back.

If given the opportunity soon, Naalir says it can stave off the impending disaster but time is of the essence. If too much is taken, the sequence of events that shall lead to the fall of the Third Imperium become irreversible.

THE TIES THAT BIND

In Tally the Favour on page 5 of Act 2, Favour earned during Act 1 is used to determine who becomes a valuable ally to the Travellers. In Act 3, those Contacts and Allies become even more important.

The Travellers' actions in Act 3 amount to performing a soft coup and that will not be possible without useful and powerful friends. If they built allegiances in Act 1 and strengthened them in Act 2, then Act 3 is where those friendships become vital aspects of the campaign.

The Referee is advised to build out those characters who have become important in the Travellers' fortunes. Important Contacts should conveniently appear when needed. Allies are ready to stand up for them and come to their aid when things get tough. If they are to build the pillars of the Determinism Engine, they are going to need help. Fortunately they have allegiances with one or more powerful persons, agencies, corporations and other entities who can pave the way when they run into seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Allies and Contacts should not be used as deus ex machinae, in which friends magically show up and save the day whenever the Travellers get into trouble. That does not make for an enjoyable narrative. Make the Travellers earn success by seeking Allies and Contacts out.

PATHWAYS

In Act 1, the Travellers enjoyed a life of glamour, gallivanting about the Core with nary a care, at the beck and call of the rich and famous who filled the staterooms of their luxury conveyance, the *Ventura Fortuna*. Their voyages gave them the opportunity to see the diverse array of worlds in the sector, taking part in adventures and bearing witness to the heart of the Third Imperium in all its glory and foibles. All the while, a mystery was unravelling before them and they discovered that they had been hosted by a most unusual patron – an alien conscious intelligence.

After the cataclysmic conclusion of the first act, Act 2 took the Travellers on a mind-bending journey of exploration and danger, the likes of which they had never experienced. They made great discoveries and completed challenging quests. After they completed the adventures contained therein, they had what they need to progress into the final act.

This is where they put it all together. If the Travellers remain on the side of Naalir, then they are ready to implement its grand design, which will change Charted Space forever. If Naalir has acquired the things that it needs but the Travellers now choose to oppose it, then this is their last chance to stop it. The narrative assumes the Travellers remain aligned with Naalir and that the final act will be used to execute its grand plan.

The path can take several directions. The events and adventures within these pages may be ordered as necessary depending on the Travellers' actions. Layercake, on page 233, is the lynchpin adventure, the one that is most dependent on what they decide to do. In this adventure, the Travellers find themselves in prison but not just any prison; they are locked down in Sher Imperial Prison, only a parsec from Depot. They may end up there due to their actions in the other adventures of the act, or the Referee may simply start them there, making a sharp contrast from the previous act.

Assembly, on page 217, is a loose collection of adventures that comprise the Travellers' efforts to recruit and transform the other conscious intelligences of the Core into allies that Naalir can work with in its quest to build the Determinism Engine, a predictive network of computational power and data analysis that will change the very nature of Charted Space. Conscious intelligence is not the only transformative technology introduced in this campaign. Consciousness transfer and the hop drive have become part of the story as well. They may even have acquired some Ancients technology. The Travellers' journey has put the tools of galaxy-shattering transformation into their hands. They have been gifted with multiple forms of Promethean Fire, with which they can reshape the galaxy.

Wild Strain, on page 252, brings their confrontation with the Imperial Quarantine Agency to an explosive conclusion. This adventure might work best as the penultimate chapter of the campaign but like the others, it can be inserted in any order desired. The Wild Strain is the other conscious intelligence that was housed at Research Station Omicron along with Naalir. Unlike the seemingly beneficent Naalir, the Wild Strain is a tortured creature that wants revenge. The Wild Strain is a hybrid product, not unlike Naalir in some ways. It was harvested from an alien intelligence, the 'Chips' from Cymbeline (Solomani Rim 2527, A9E4840-D), exotic silicon-based lifeforms valued for their ability to both process data and physically reproduce. The chips have demonstrated the ability to make clones of themselves or create unique individuals drawn from a little-understood genetic library. The Imperial Research Directorate never determined whether the Chips constituted sophont life or not. The fact is, they were never permitted to. It was more convenient to see them as tools than intelligent life, so that is what they remained.

The following guidance is presented to help the Referee get a handle on the narrative options available.

ASSEMBLY > LAYERCAKE > WILD STRAIN

Perhaps the standard narrative approach is to begin by having the Travellers attempt to assemble a collection of conscious intelligences to enable the creation of the Determinism Engine. Attempting to alter the status quo can get one thrown into prison, especially when one's actions amount to treason against the Emperor. After they engineer their daring escape, Naalir and the conscious intelligences it has built seek to quell the dangers of the Wild Strain at Celetron, which has been let loose upon the Imperium. Victory might enable Naalir and the Travellers to become heroes of the realm, possibly even getting the chance to implement the Determinism Engine.

LAYERCAKE > ASSEMBLY > WILD STRAIN

Starting the Travellers in prison might be a novel transition from the previous act of the campaign. Depending on how they wrapped up the adventures of the second act, they will be surprised to find themselves in lock-up, not knowing how or why they were incarcerated. After they solve the mystery and find a way out of their predicament, they begin the process of assembling the Determinism Engine.

WILD STRAIN > LAYERCAKE > ASSEMBLY

Starting with Wild Strain assumes that either Naalir or the Travellers express interest in visiting Research Station Omicron, where the original Naalir has been housed for centuries and where the station's second research project is well underway. Whatever their motivations, their actions may lead to a harrowing series of events in which the Wild Strain is released. Putting the genie back into the bottle proves a difficult task but if they can find a way to survive both the predations of a hostile conscious intelligence and stave off the Imperial Quarantine Agency (again!), the Travellers can advance to the next stage, but not before they are captured and imprisoned for their involvement in the affair. Once they are out, they finally get the opportunity to build the Determinism Engine.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Layercake does not make for a very enticing finale but depending on the momentum of the campaign, it could be done. The narrative would have the Travellers achieving most of their goals only to wake up in prison for their actions. It is not outside the realms of possibility but if an exciting climax is desired, it is probably not the way to go. It might enable the Travellers to end the campaign with a tale of redemption, as they arise from incarceration to find a very different Charted Space.

Assembly can be a challenging adventure to run, since in most instances the Travellers might feel compelled to be secretive as they build their network of conscious intelligences. They will find that they cannot do it alone and must leverage Contacts and Allies for help. As they do, their actions become a more public affair, making things more complex and interesting as the Imperium's power brokers become aware of the monumental changes to come.

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE THEM

Establishing a rival communications network right under the noses of the Imperium government may seem like a daunting task but it can be done. How the Travellers go about it and what moves they make will affect how successful the network is. After that, they will have to demonstrate its abilities and present them to the desired persons or agencies. There are myriad ways they can go about it, more than can be described in this tome, so the following is some guidance along with suggested paths they might take.

LEVERAGE THOSE ALLIES AND CONTACTS

The Travellers have not spent two entire campaign acts making friends for nothing. In addition to the Contacts and Allies they acquired during Traveller Generation, hail back to the passengers they hosted in Act 1. The four categories – Underworld, Influencer, Political and Wealth – were used to determine passengers and gain favour in the Running a Luxury Liner section on page 45 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

Then, in Tally the Favour on page 5 of Act 2, the Referee must determine if the Travellers made inroads with one or two groups more than the others. As the Travellers embarked upon a series of quests and investigations wherein they might have been fugitives, leaning on their friends for help became a necessity.

As they embark upon Act 3, those friends should be recurring characters in their adventures, people they can depend on for assistance when in a pinch. They will need that more than ever now that they intend to revolutionise Charted Space.

Following are suggestions of what each type of Contact might have to offer and how that can be incorporated into the campaign.

TECHNOLOGY AT THEIR DISPOSAL

The Travellers have gained access to numerous items of advanced gear. Hopefully, they have not cast those aside. The technological advantages they have will be key to successfully navigating the third act, which requires them to overcome some challenging environments.

UNDERWORLD ALLIES

Underworld allies include thugs, gangsters, spies, corrupt politicians, terrorists, smugglers, pirates, crimelords and just about every other miscreant that one might find hiding under a rock, grifting, running from the law, or double dealing in some dark alley, hideout or – in many cases – a corporate boardroom.

If the Travellers' allies are members of the criminal element, they have a broad range of options available to them. Criminal activity is everywhere and leveraging what they have to offer is only a holovid call, encrypted x-boat message, or visit to the local dive bar away.

Criminal allies can enable Travellers to enter places they might not otherwise be able to go, thwart or get past military or security forces, obtain illegal goods or travel where they are not allowed. Most of these actions may be taken beneath the notice of the authorities or by bribing them to look the other way. Not everyone is susceptible to bribes so from time-to-time, the Travellers must rely upon avenues available to their criminal partners, which will not always be the most direct route to what they want or where they want to go.

Receiving a favour from a criminal ally means the debt will have to be paid back. This will not always occur immediately, nor will their underworld allies identify what they expect in return at the moment the favour is given. Criminals like to call in markers when they need them. When their ally requests payback, the Travellers are expected to deliver when they need it, not when it is convenient for the Travellers. It is unwise to defer or deflect such a request. Criminal allies can provide useful services but when it is time to pay them back, the Travellers would be well advised not to renege on their commitment lest they end up on the wrong end of a laser pistol. Likewise, the request might not be balanced with whatever the criminals did for the Travellers. Sometimes, it will be far more difficult to pay them back than it was for the criminals to assist the Travellers. That is the way crime works. Criminals live on the edge and they did not achieve their position by conducting fair transactions.

ENDRJUNN FREIGHTER

CLASS: Smuggler Variant

The Endrjunn is built on the frame of a typical 5,000-ton freighter but outfitted with a breakaway hull to contain a smuggling packet, a 1,000-ton slower-than-light spacecraft that disconnects from the main hull for smuggling missions. The Endrjunn has oversized manoeuvre and jump drives to enable it to operate as a 5,000-ton ship when combined with the packet.

TL12		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	4,000 tons, Standard	—	200
	Breakway Hull	80	160
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 2	100	20
M-Drive	Thrust 2 (energy inefficient)	100	120
J-Drive	Jump 2 (energy inefficient)	255	150
Power Plant	Fusion (TL12), Power 2,400	160	286.875
Fuel Tanks	J-2, 8 weeks of operation	1,032	—
Bridge		60	20
Computer	Computer/5	—	0.03
Sensors	Civilian Grade	1	3
Systems	Medical Bay	4	2
	Fuel Processor (500 tons/day)	25	1.25
Staterooms	Standard x13	52	6.5
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/2	—	0.2
Common Areas		13	1.3
Cargo		2,118	—

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineers x12, Maintenance x4, Administrators x2, Medic, Officer

Hull: 1,600

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr80930/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr971.155

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
800

Manoeuvre Drive
1,040 (1,300)

Jump Drive
1,040 (1,300)

Sensors
1

Fuel Processor
25

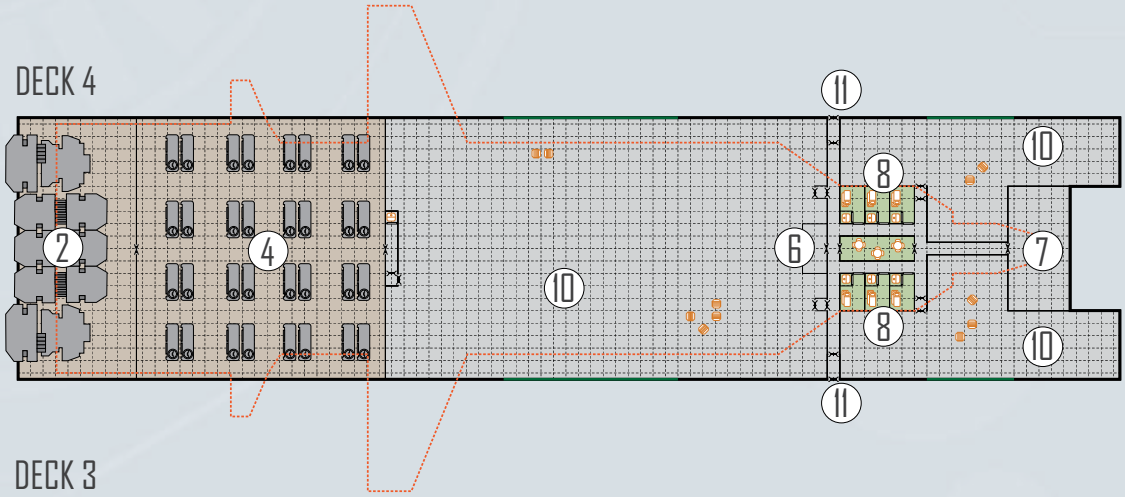
Medical Bay
1

ENDRJB UNN FREIGHTER (SMUGGLER VARIANT)

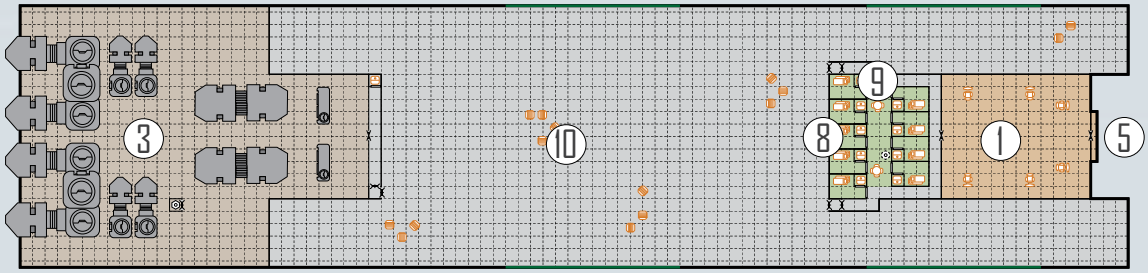
LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. M-drive
3. J-drive
4. Power plant
5. Sensors
6. Medical bay
7. Fuel processor
8. Staterooms
9. Common areas
10. Cargo
11. Airlock

DECK 4



DECK 3



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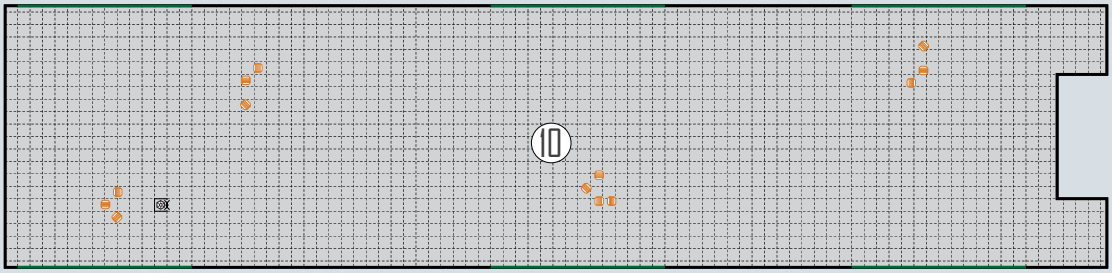
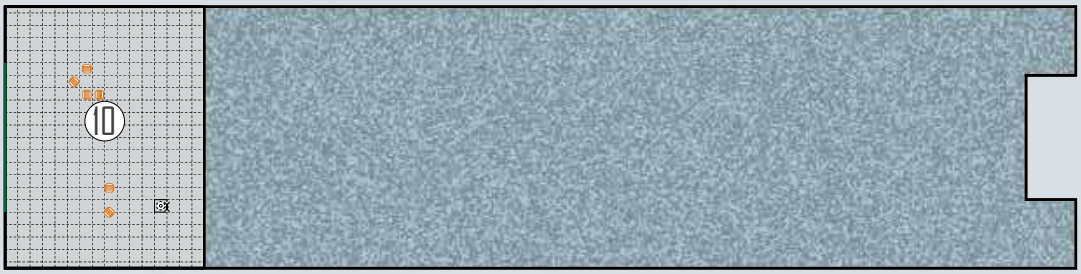


DECK 1



1 square = 0.5 Ton

SMUGGLER PACKET

The Endrjunn packet connects to the dorsal surface of the mothership seamlessly. When the two are connected, the packet's computer, sensors and weapons become those of the mother ship and the combined ships' Thrust is 3.

TL12		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	1,000 tons, Standard	—	60
	Aerofins	50	5
	Breakway Hull	20	40
	Stealth (improved)	—	100
Armour	Crystaliron, Armour: 4	60	12
M-Drive	Thrust 5	50	100
Power Plant	Fusion (TL 12), Power 810	54	54
Fuel Tanks	8 weeks of operation	12	—
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
Bridge	Bridge, Holographic Controls	20	6.25
Computer	Computer/20	—	5
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
Weapons	Triple Turrets, Pop-Up (pulse lasers) x6	12	30
	Triple Turret, Pop-Up (sandcasters)	8	11
Systems	Cargo Crane	5	5
	Loading Belt (improved)	1	0.01
Staterooms	Standard x8	32	4
	Low Berths x10	5	0.5
Software	Evade/1	—	1
	Fire Control/1	—	4
	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
Common Areas		6	0.6
Cargo	Concealed Cargo	50	1
	Cargo Space	612	—

Crew

Pilot, Engineers x2, Maintenance, Gunners x10

Hull: 400

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr36972/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr433.66

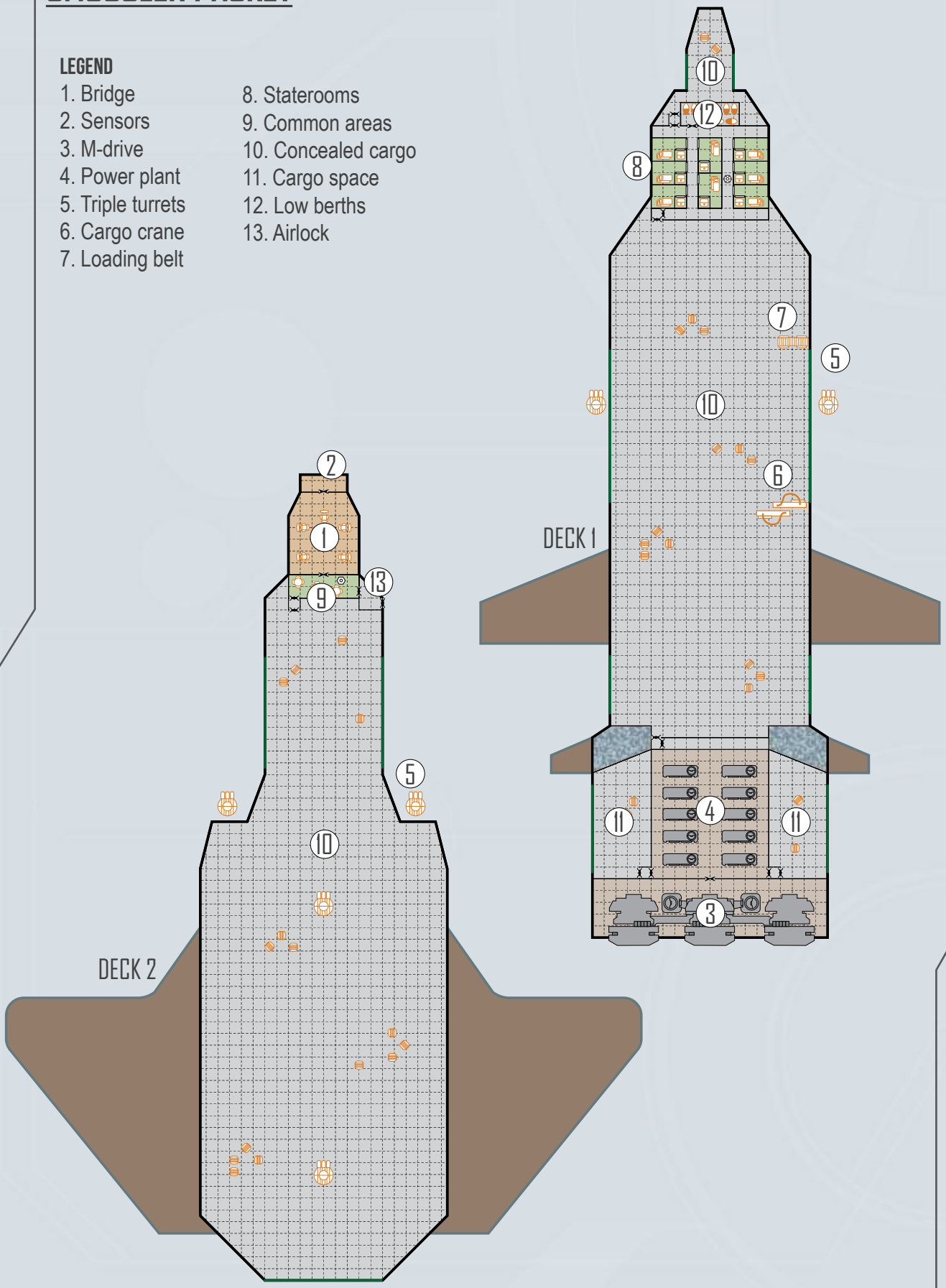
Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	200
Manoeuvre Drive	500
Sensors	4
Weapons	79
Low Berths	1

SMUGGLER PACKET

LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. M-drive
4. Power plant
5. Triple turrets
6. Cargo crane
7. Loading belt
8. Staterooms
9. Common areas
10. Concealed cargo
11. Cargo space
12. Low berths
13. Airlock



1 square = 0.5 Ton

Favours performed by criminal allies will undoubtedly require reciprocation by performing other criminal acts: breaking and entering, burglary, fraud, forgery and other forms of mayhem and skulduggery. Roll 2D on the Reciprocity table to determine what sort of crime is asked of them.

Reciprocity

2D	Criminal Reciprocity
2	Forgery or minor theft
3	Breaking and entering, moderate theft
4	Grifting, fraud
5	Insider trading, securities fraud
6	Minor heist
7	Slander, political hack job
8	Major heist
9	Armed robbery
10	Property or other major theft
11	Arson, property destruction
12	Assassination

There are degrees of severity for each of the criminal acts they may be asked to perpetrate. As described before, reciprocal tasks are not always on par with the favour that was done for the Travellers. If the favour done for them was relatively minor, then a theft they are asked to perform might be of similar severity, or it may be considerably more difficult or risky. If the favour that was done for them was considerable – such as getting them out of jail or getting dangerous technology past a checkpoint – then the job will *always* be a difficult one. For example, if a criminal contact performed a challenging task for the Travellers, and the Referee rolls a 12, garnering the Assassination result, then the job will be to take out a high-profile rival, opposition figure or other powerful figure who stands in their way.

For narrative purposes, the Referee may use each reciprocal job to move the Travellers across the map. The Travellers have goals to complete during this act of the campaign and interstellar travel will be an important part of the story. Allow each reciprocal action to coincidentally move the Travellers in the desired direction so they can complete their goals while paying back their criminal allies.

INFLUENTIAL ALLIES

Influencers include people in the public eye: media stars, famous intellectuals, religious leaders and gurus, holovid stars, journalists, superstar athletes, pop stars and other recognisable figures. Allies and Contacts of this type can impart fame, notoriety, legitimacy and other qualities to the Travellers.

With the right backers, the Travellers enhance their ability to move about freely despite being involved in activities deemed questionable, unsavoury or even traitorous. It becomes difficult to make a problem like the Travellers go away when they have backing from popular public figures and all their fans, devotees or parishioners.

Fame enables the Travellers to walk a fine line, whereupon they can get away with things they otherwise could not. Who is to say that someone's actions are bad when so many people support them? Cognitive dissonance becomes one's ally as people come to accept the actions of the famous as acceptable simply because they are famous. However, they must take care not to overstep their bounds. The history of public life is rife with media figures whose belief in their own invincibility has been proven wrong. Fame has a way of skyrocketing until those who possess it seem to have greater power than high-ranking politicians, generals, admirals, business leaders and other such figures, but pushing things too far can end in a massive fall. The Travellers must take caution not to overextend themselves lest they incur such a disaster. Likewise, they must pay attention to the waves of public sentiment. If their famous sponsors or allies – the very people who gave the Travellers their fame to begin with – lose their public standing, they can be brought down by association.

Using Influencer cachet can be a tricky business in an interstellar setting. One does not know whether their patron is on the ascent or decline if not directly in their company. Therefore, should the Travellers lean into an Influencer alliance, they must maintain communication with them to ensure their support is strong. Otherwise, they must seek out another patron or recede from the public eye and find another way to achieve their goals.

To this end, the Travellers have access to a shared additional characteristic: Fame (FAM). Like any other characteristic, FAM has a value of 0–15, and each level awards the possessor with the requisite

Characteristic Modifier. A famous friend must be drawn from the Influencer category and has a starting FAM of 8+1D. The Travellers were not hobnobbing about with just anyone. The contacts they made on the *Ventura Fortuna* were the cream of the crop, so their FAM level starts out high.

Once per month of game time, the Referee should check on the FAM level of the Travellers' patron, rolling 2D and adding the FAM DM. Then check the result on the Fame table.

2D	Result
2 or less	The individual has committed some act or suffered a social faux paus that horribly damages their standing, reducing FAM by -2D. Fear not, however. The public is fickle and the famous person may try to redeem their level *one time* over the course of the following year without incurring a negative DM. However, if they fail the second roll with a result of 5 or less, FAM is permanently reduced, barring intervention by the Referee. After all, who does not love a redemption story? The more distant one falls, the more rapidly they can bounce back.
3–5	The famous person has fallen out of favour, losing FAM -1D. They may attempt to get back on track without incurring a negative DM three times over the course of the following year. If they fail all rolls with results of 5 or less, their FAM is permanently reduced.
6–8	The public is getting a bit bored or overexposed to the famous person. They may lay low for 1D months before returning to the public eye or risk greater derision by overstaying their welcome. If they lie low, they lose the benefits of FAM for the duration of their sabbatical and so do the Travellers who patronise them. After the time is up, they may attempt their return by making another FAM check at their original level. If the famous person overstays their welcome, they lose FAM -D3.
9–12	Things are going well and the famous person's FAM retains its current level.
13 or more	The famous person's skyrocketing FAM rises to heretofore unseen heights. Add FAM +D3, to a maximum of 15.

The FAM check is entropic. It is difficult to maintain and biased towards falling. Famous people must do ever more wild and exotic things, creating new and original art, reaching out to new audiences, win new contests or sporting events and garner more attention. Failing to do so decreases one's FAM, which does not indicate that they have failed, merely that their cachet no longer opens all the doors that it once did.

It should be noted that FAM is different from SOC. It is far more mercurial and can rise and fall with much greater ease. FAM cannot be used as part of a skill check. It only functions on its own, granting the possessor the ability to do things that might otherwise be undoable, cut through red tape that others could not cut and meet people one might otherwise not be able to meet.

The Travellers' use of FAM is complicated by its association with a patron. To maintain their use of FAM, they must remain within the sphere of their famous patron. This sphere is a distance of six parsecs. Roll 2D once per month to determine the patron's location. On a roll of 7 or less, they remain wherever they were. On a roll of 8–10, they move 1D parsecs in a random direction, perhaps going on tour, giving sermons, performing in an athletic competition, or whatever fits their description. On a roll of 11–12, they travel further away, going 2D parsecs in a random direction. The Travellers will have to move with the patron, staying within six parsecs of them, to maintain their use of FAM. This dependency can make it difficult to accomplish goals when the Travellers must travel far to accomplish them. To complete their task and build the Determinism Engine, they cannot wander in circles within a six-parsec radius. They are going to need greater independence, or must find a way to get their famous patron to travel with them in more or less the same sphere.

The Travellers can eliminate this dependency by creating their own fame, which is a more nebulous concept. Perhaps one of the Travellers is an artist, writer or musical performer. Allow them to rise among the ranks of their artform by making a series of successful checks. Should they manage to do so, and independently establish themselves as stars in their own right, they will no longer depend upon their

patron for FAM. However, it does mean that they must make the monthly check for themselves, bearing full responsibility for their success and failure.

POLITICAL ALLIES

Political allies include leaders of nations and worlds, high-ranking military officers and war heroes, highly visible people in roles such as starport administrators, Imperial ministers and ambassadors. It can include nobles as well since many clearly have political roles but honour nobles are excluded since they do not participate in the government in any meaningful way.

Having political allies can enable the Travellers to operate with relative impunity should they operate within the boundaries of Imperial law. Indirectly, the levers of power are theirs to operate as long as they maintain the favour of their political patrons.

There are factors that can affect the effectiveness of their patron's power. Politics moves in waves; sometimes the wavelengths are long and sometimes very short. A party or movement might have significant momentum one month and the next it might fall out of favour or find its ability to influence reduced.

Political parties in the Imperium may be divided into conservative, progressive, centrist, exotic and minority groups with further subclasses. Roll on the Political Groups table to determine which category the Travellers' ally subscribes to and then select a party colour. The Faction column describes what the colour stands for.

Political Groups

2D	Category
2	Exotic and Minority
3–6	Conservative
7	Centrist
8–11	Progressive
12	Exotic and Minority

Category	Colour	Faction
Conservative	Very Hard Ultraviolet	Supremacists
	Hard Ultraviolet	Militants
	Dark Ultraviolet	Moral constraints (anti-psionics)
	Ultraviolet	Free trade
	Sparkle	Traditionalists
	Purple	Expansionists
	Blue	Right of centre
	Green	Environmentalist
	Yellow	Imperial family
Progressive	Infrared	Fair trade
	Far Infrared	Potentialists (psionics rights)
	X-Infrared	Pacifists
	Z-Infrared	Authoritarian
	Multi-colour	Chaoticists
Centrist	Orange	Centrists
	Red	Statists
	Cerise	Social action
	Aglow	Socialists
	Near Infrared	Pan-sophontists
Exotic and Minority	Magenta	Meritocracy
	Lek	Egalitarianist
	Titanium	Rights for artificials
	White	Anarchists
	Black	One True Way
	Off-white	Followers
	Gold	Plutocrats
	Explosive	Violent overthrow

Each of the conservative, progressive and centrist categories have representation at the Moot, while exotic and minority parties vary with trends and public sentiment. Sometimes they have representation and sometimes they do not. The examples in the table are but a few of the transitory movements that come and go.

Local politicians, those who do not belong to the nobility but to the government of a single world, often claim party membership as well but not always. The worlds of the Imperium are diverse, run by a plethora of government types and many defy classification. For simplicity's sake, the Referee may use the tables to determine how local government is aligned as well, keeping in mind that they might or might not claim actual party membership.

Use the table to determine which factions the Travellers' political ally supports. Another important consideration is where the Travellers' knight falls on the political spectrum. Have the knighted Traveller select a faction to support or invent a new one to be classified among the exotic and minority factions. However, if their knight decides to create a new one, they should consider that doing so deprives them of the protection that a popular, well-heeled faction can provide.

If the Travellers select a group from among the conservative, progressive and centrist factions, then they can reap the benefits of patronage. Each of these groups and all their factions have support in the Moot and aligning with them means the Travellers can rely on the support of the worlds of the Imperium. Let the narrative dictate which worlds are sympathetic and

which are opposed to the faction the Travellers support. Keep in mind that the political alignment of a member of the Moot does not necessarily reflect the mood on the world or worlds that that noble manages. Nobles are merely the appointed bureaucracy. Each world is run independently by its own government.

As the Travellers make their way around the Core, the Referee should make a check at each world they visit to determine whether their faction holds sway there. Alternatively, they may determine that a cluster of worlds shares similar political views, rolling for one planet in the cluster and then selecting how many parsecs their sphere of influence extends. Or, if randomness is preferred, roll 1D for the radius of the sphere, 2D if a broader sphere is desired. Keep in mind that the politics of each world government may differ from that of the noble assigned to the system. For simplicity's sake, the Referee may decide that the world and its noble are aligned most of the time but they should allow for anomalies to occur where they differ.

For added complexity, add dissenters to each cluster by rolling 1Dx10% and then assigning different political categories to a commensurate percentage of the worlds in the cluster. It makes sense that not every sphere of influence will make a perfect circle on the starmap. The Referee can assign overlapping circles, allowing the edges of multiple spheres to meet, creating political regions to the map.

When the Travellers encounter members of other political parties or factions, it does not necessarily need to be contentious. There can be debate, negotiation and a sincere attempt to recruit or sway the Travellers from their current political stance should they find themselves among an opposing group. In addition, no political party has complete hegemony over an entire world, not even the most totalitarian regime. The political category of each world indicates its current majority, a poll taken of which category holds sway at a given moment.

In the Core, political power emanates from Capital. The direction the political winds blow at the Imperial court tend to affect the political mood of the Core subsector, emanating like ripples in a pond to other subsectors over time, and beyond into neighbouring sectors too. At a given time, conservatives, progressives, centrists or even exotics might have captured the political imaginations of Capital's citizens. They tend to lean conservative, reflecting the nature of the emperorship, but again, the winds of sentiment ebb and flow, allowing others to dominate from time-to-time.

The political category of a world can change. Although a category might dominate a world or cluster for years, decades or even centuries in some cases, by and large they do change from time-to-time. Allow the Travellers to witness such changes. They, too, might change their affiliation but should take caution; a group of Travellers might think it best to change whenever the wind blows, taking advantage of whatever the current trend is. However, if they change their affiliation too often, they become unreliable and their patron's trust might dissipate.

The Travellers have a political connection of their own; there is an Imperial knight among them who can directly affect politics. Should the Travellers select a political category to align themselves with, and then associate their chosen faction with Farhome, they may attempt to make that world the centre of a cluster. While Farhome is too underpopulated and unimportant to wield much influence initially, the Referee may allow them to enhance its political value by publicising its resources, establishing alliances with more highly populated and more important neighbours, or by creating a crisis, celebration or other event that draws attention. Farhome may be small and obscure but every world in the Imperium can have its moment under the right circumstances.

WEALTHY ALLIES

Anything and anyone can be bought, or so it is said. The truly wealthy can operate on the notion that if a problem comes up, they can pay to resolve it or make it to go away. Having wealthy allies can afford the Travellers similar privileges. In an interstellar society driven by free trade, one can transcend boundaries of law and regulatory limitations by having the Credits to pay fines, bribes, exorbitant fees and outright purchases of assets that might otherwise have been denied.

The advantage of having allies who can pay exorbitant sums of money is that their coverage is broad. There are not many corners of the Core in which money does not talk. However, the main drawback is that when someone pays for something, they expect something else in return. Allies are allies but ultimately, they did not get wealthy by giving charity to friends. If the Travellers have wealthy allies, they will have to do something to earn Credits given to them. This opens up myriad possibilities for adventure.

Paying one's wealthy friends back is another matter altogether. If their moneyed friends had wanted to hire someone to do something, they would probably have done it already. The wealthy are composed of nobles, megacorporate moguls, heirs and heiresses, dilettantes and rich landowners, all of whom have the means to pay for services. That they have not should say something about the jobs they are likely to ask of the Travellers. This is not to say the Travellers will be employed with scut work – some form of abysmal and humiliating manual labour or similar. If they cannot pay the money back – with interest – then they will be asked for something that could not otherwise be easily obtained. They will employ the Travellers with jobs that require confidentiality: smuggling, spying, vengeance, slander, larceny, fraud, forgery and other forms of mayhem and skulduggery.

If the Travellers lean on their wealthy allies for assistance, roll 2D on the Wealthy Favours table to determine what sort of quid pro quo is asked of them.

Wealthy Favours

2D	Quid Pro Quo
2	Nepotism or favour
3	Forgery or deception
4	Infiltration
5	Sabotage
6	Scheming and scamming
7	Minor slander
8	Political hack job
9	Major slander
10	Make a Rival
11	Make an Enemy
12	Duel champion

Depending on how much wealth or financial assistance was spent to aid the Travellers, they can expect to pay their allies back with an appropriately difficult service. The Service table provides guidance as to what sort of service the Travellers can expect to provide. The Difficulty column indicates the level required for at least one skill check that occurs during the course of the service.

Service

Expenditure (or Equivalent)	Difficulty
Cr100000–999999	Average (8+)
MCr1–9.999999	Difficult (10+)
MCr10–49.999999	Very Difficult (12+)
MCr50–499.999999	Formidable (14+)
MCr500+	Impossible (16+)

For example, if the Travellers needed a service that cost their allies MCr30 or the equivalent, then they are asked to perform a task from the Quid Pro Quo table that will require the successful completion of at least *one Very Difficult (12+) check. To give an idea, if the Quid Pro Quo action were sabotage, that might mean that a Very Difficult (12+) Explosives, Mechanic, Stealth or Deception check will crop up.*

Should the Travellers fail to succeed on the check, all is not lost. Allies do not give up on each other that easily. If an earnest attempt was made to reciprocate for the expenses incurred, they remain the Travellers' allies even when things do not go well. However, subsequent failures or a refusal to even attempt the check eliminates the relationship at the Referee's discretion.

WHEN TO USE ALLIES

Situations will come up that require the Travellers' allies. The narrative goal is to establish relationships with their allies. They should become important parts of the story. The Travellers must build and execute a plan to achieve their objectives in this third act of the campaign. However, there will be times when they do not see an obvious way out of some sticky situations. That is when they must call on their allies. Following are examples, complete with usable scenarios the Referee can use over the course of the act.

CARRYING CONTRABAND

When building the Determinism Engine, the Travellers will have to collect unusual materials and transport them to the sites where they intend to build nodes. Depending on their strategy, they may have to obtain and store other conscious intelligences. They may also be in possession of technology far beyond that of other Imperial citizens, technology that makes them dangerous to the Imperial military and a threat to the safety of the empire. Of course, they also have the physical manifestation of Naalir, an escaped test subject from an Imperial Research Station.

Depending on the starships they use, they might have access to advanced stealth technology that will enable them to dodge patrols and inspections, but they have aroused the suspicion of multiple Imperial agencies. They will not be able to hide forever and will eventually have to deal with a patrol or boarding inspection. If they get into a situation where they cannot run and are carrying something questionable, they might have to face dumping it, concealing it, or calling upon allies for assistance.

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK!

For example, the Travellers are caught carrying parts that can only have been manufactured at Research Station Omicron on Celetron or the naval research station on Ye-lu. These parts were not for sale and were acquired through illicit means. After being boarded, the parts are inspected and their atomic markers indicate their origin. The boarding party of the planetary navy of Sanches arrests them.

Not so fast! The Travellers call in a political favour. They were caught in a zone where their political associate's party (the Conservative Sparkles). As the reigning power in the region, their benefactor informs the captain that the arrest is unwarranted and that they are to free the Travellers at once. They comply and the Travellers continue on their way. The Sanches naval captain remembers the incident and notes that if he ever sees them again, he will need to be able to call upon someone of the same rank or higher if he intends to bring the Travellers to justice. This time, they got away. Next time they might not be so lucky.

HIGH LAW LEVEL WORLDS

The Core has many worlds with high Law Levels, those with a score of A or higher. Many have authoritarian regimes, large populations and the technology to wield a large sphere of influence. In the Core, their influence often encompasses other star systems, which are 'owned' by the larger, often oppressive parent system. This can make it difficult to pass through an interstellar region beneath the notice of its powerful government when they establish a cluster or cordon of aligned star systems.

Fornol, Irlu, Shibashliim, Ase, Aursis and Skeen, among others, are high-population worlds with oppressive governments, each of which has a mini-empire of its own, with one or more additional star systems under their control. Powerful worlds are allowed to dominate others in neighbouring systems. As long as no attempt is made to build a micro-empire that impedes Imperial law, and free trade is not hindered, the Emperor and his military forces allow a degree of conquest.

Perhaps it is viewed as natural for powerful polities to project their power... within limits, of course. Preventing them from doing so creates tension that requires release. Imperial law is vague, so there are few explicit limitations put upon member worlds. Nuclear war and enslavement are forbidden but other forms of aggression are adjudicated on a case-by-case basis. Historical precedent urges would-be conquerors not to push their luck. The Imperial Navy and Marines sit idly by, waiting to be unleashed if they overdo it or fail to justify their advances.

Passing through authoritarian multi-star systems without difficulty might require some effort. One way to avoid dealing with them is not to interact at all. The Travellers might opt for wilderness refuelling in lieu of stopping at ports of call but worlds such as these often protect their gas giants and planetoid belts with system defence craft, orbital mines and other deterrents. Avoiding contact will not be easy. Things they can do include:

- Blockade running – Outrun SDBs and patrol ships when approached. Pilot and Gunner skills come in handy.
- Political manoeuvring – Use Diplomat and Persuade skills to ward them off. A ship with a landed Imperial knight might have diplomatic immunity.
- Legal manoeuvring – Use Advocate and Admin skills to counteract overzealous system defence forces by either confounding them with regulations or turning their laws against them.

The entire universe is not arrayed against the Travellers and it should not be played as such, but the authoritarian systems of the Core live up to their reputations. Many bear Amber Zone designations for this very reason. They are to be avoided and contact minimised if the Travellers want to move through unimpeded.

JUST PASSING THROUGH

Using political connections to get past overzealous planetary security requires a check by the Referee of the world and its surrounding region. Determine who the prevailing political party is by using the rules described in Political Allies on page 208. Figure out where the epicentre is and how far the ripples extend. If the Travellers' allies are from the same category as that of the high-population world, possibly even the same faction, then they have common ground and working with them might be relatively easy.

If they are members of an opposing party, then they might not want to try leveraging political connections. Keep in mind that just because there is a reigning power in the region, that does not mean that there are not minority parties that align with the Travellers' political ally. These, too, can be leveraged. Things get more complex but clever Travellers can weave it into the narrative and make an advantage out of what might otherwise have been a serious disadvantage. There could be an active rebellion fighting the majority party or willing insurrectionists, terrorists or dissidents who want to help them. There are myriad possibilities.

Where there is an authoritarian regime, there is almost always corruption. Criminal allies have exceptional value in these environments. They have spent years, decades perhaps, finding the loopholes in the system and corruptible contacts with whom they can work. Smugglers have secret routes, illicit docking privileges and transportation options that enable them to get their goods planetside, regardless of local rules and regulations. The Travellers can use the established underworld byways to get through an otherwise impenetrable security cordon.

NOBLE RIVALRY

The nobility is an extension of the Emperor's will; at least, so it is said. Most of the Emperor's relationships with his appointed nobility are transactional. The nobles are granted fiefs, power and wealth, allegedly in return for dutiful and honourable service. The fact is duty and honour will only get one so far. The nature of sophont life is survival, which manifests as self-interest. Not every noble serves without the expectation of something material in return. The majority of the women and men of the nobility are loyal subjects who serve without question. However, there are those who can be turned to the Travellers' advantage.

Not all are criminals and traitors. Some are merely freethinkers who see the chinks in the armour of the Imperium. They see bad times ahead and will listen to alternative viewpoints. Most will want to fit any radical action they may take within the context of Imperial law and few will outright betray the Emperor, but many recognise the need for reform.

The Travellers have an Imperial noble among them. This enables them to tread the line between duty and dissent but with that ability comes the potential for rivalry. In Act 1, the Duchess of Aursis potentially becomes a rival to the knight (or *baron* if the Travellers successfully promote the system) because the knight could become the tipping point in the debate on whether to grant the Chanestin Kingdom a cultural zone. That and other rivalries with members of the nobility may persist. If so, the Travellers can expect to be opposed as they move forward with the creation of the Determinism Engine.

The Travellers might have made allies among the nobility as well. Nobles may be found in the Wealth and Political Favour categories. Should the Travellers run into opposition among the nobility, calling upon allies can neutralise the threat.

SHAKING ENEMIES

At this point in the campaign, the Travellers have made many friends but also enemies. Many of these have scores to settle with the Travellers and will stop at nothing to get revenge or prevent them from completing their objectives. Their nemeses include powerful agencies such as the Imperial Navy, intelligence services, law enforcement, megacorporations and criminal cartels.

Attempting to operate within the Core with powerful enemies trying to thwart them will be difficult. The Travellers must find ways to travel beneath their notice. If they have a stealthy ship, things will be easier. Even in the Core, it is possible to navigate through the web of high-technology, high-surveillance and high-population worlds without leaving an enormous footprint. Most systems have multiple planets, including both terrestrial and gas giant worlds that orbit the primary or companion star. Most people live at the system's mainworld but a small spaceport in an outer orbit or mining station on a gas giant moon can serve as a clandestine stopover.

Likewise, backwater worlds, those with low populations, low technology but functional starports will be extremely valuable. Chokta (Core 1422, C7C2248-A) would make for an excellent stopover; it has a low population, middling Tech Level and serviceable Class C starport. This world has no naval or scout base and is of little interest to just about anyone, and yet is within 2–3 parsecs of several very important worlds. For example, if the Travellers have business on Keplo, Bendo, Velpare or Shibashliim, they may first go to Chokta to make alternative travel plans. Docking their own ship at Chokta Downport, they can hitch a ride on a tramp trader, belter or mercenary cruiser, enabling them to keep a low profile when arriving at the target world.

Making convoluted plans will become part of their business. The Travellers can lean on their allies and contacts for help. There is always the danger that they will be discovered, as they have acquired a level of notoriety at this point and can be recognised at any time. If they do not try to disguise themselves, make a check at each world they visit to determine whether they blow their cover.

Roll 2D. On a result of 10+, they are recognised. Include the following DMs:

Starport A or B: DM+2
Starport C or D: DM+0
Starport E or X: DM-2
Population 8+: DM+2
Population 5–7: DM+0
Population 4-: DM-2
Law Level 9+: DM+2
Law Level 5–8: DM+0
Law Level 4-: DM-2

HIGH-SECURITY SITES

Depending on the course they choose, the Travellers might find themselves in need of resources that the Imperium, megacorporations and other agencies protect with high technology, advanced security systems and units of highly trained soldiers or lethal robots. Getting past such defences will require a clever plan but even then they will sometimes get tripped up during the execution of that plan.

They have many tools at their disposal. First and foremost of these is Naalir, who can help them infiltrate many sites with its advanced ability to decrypt security mechanisms. This should not be used as a deus ex machina every time the Travellers run into a difficult security system. Allow Naalir to help but the Travellers must do the legwork, running blockades to get planetside, breaking through the outer defences of a secure site and working their allies and contacts for access are just a few of the challenges that should be set before them.

There are few security systems that will be beyond their ability to penetrate but getting into position to do so could be the more difficult challenge.

THE OPPOSITION

It should not feel as if the Travellers are opposed at every turn. It does not make for an appealing narrative or enjoyable gaming session if the Travellers must look over their shoulders at every turn. There should be moments when they feel secure, when they have successfully lost any possible tail and can feel confident that they have put space between themselves and the entities that want to take them down. However, those forces are still present. While they might not be in every star system they visit, the Travellers should run into these groups from time-to-time.

IMPERIAL QUARANTINE AGENCY

The Travellers have run into Quarantine before, notably at Depot in the Act 1, Seas of the Ancients. Quarantine will turn up time and again, and they have a significant role in some of the adventures in this act as well. Wherever there is a potential threat to the safety and integrity of the Imperium, Quarantine will either be present or on the way to evaluate the situation. They lean on Imperial Naval Intelligence for much of their information but despite being an important subset of the navy, Quarantine officers are sometimes looked on as outsiders, heretics among the faithful. If the Travellers get a sense that this rivalry exists, they might be able to exploit it.

IMPERIAL NAVY

The navy seems to be everywhere but they are more dispersed than they might seem. Each subsector has numbered fleets of the navy but sector fleets are concentrated at depots and other key worlds of the Core. Naval doctrine dictates that large fleet elements should be kept concentrated so they can be called upon to use overwhelming force should a threat arise. Having their most powerful ships dispersed throughout a sector would only make them easier to pick off in the event of attack.

The Travellers' primary interactions with the Imperial Navy will be when they encounter patrols, task forces and other smaller groups, and usually only ships of destroyer size or smaller. This is the Core, so from time-to-time, they might encounter a large sector fleet element but it should be rare.

Overcoming planetary navy elements is one thing but the Imperial Navy is quite another. It is perhaps the most indomitable and incorruptible force in Charted Space. While malfeasance, scandal and criminal activity do occur within the ranks of the navy, such incidents are unusual, and when they occur, are blown up in media, the culprits exposed and senior command stirred into action to prevent such a thing from occurring again.

The quality of Imperial Navy spacecraft is consistent. Sector fleets have the best assets, enormous carriers, battleships and dreadnoughts, none of which are likely to deal directly with the Travellers. Numbered subsector fleets are more likely candidates but their flagships are cruisers, light carriers and destroyers, again unlikely to deal with any threat that the Travellers may pose until well into their operation. More likely encounters are with destroyer escorts, frigates, corvettes, close escorts and fighters, relatively small ships of less than 2,000 tons which, comparatively speaking, pose a significant threat to any ships the Travellers are likely to operate. Most of these ships have Thrust 6, powerful armaments and are more than capable of vaporising a ship in the sub-1,000 ton range.

BULLY ON THE BLOCK

The Travellers might want to avoid contact with the Imperial Navy. If they cannot, they will need an exit strategy. Political allies are a viable resource, as are influencers. Wealthy and criminal allies are unlikely to be of assistance but creative Travellers might find a use for them.

Depending on the type of ship the Travellers have, they might be able to go toe-to-toe with a small naval vessel in combat but the presence of the navy extends throughout Imperial space. If they pick a fight with the navy, there is nowhere within Imperial space to hide. There *will* be a reckoning and the outcome will probably not go in the Travellers' favour.

If the Travellers find themselves in a suitably powerful offensive spacecraft, they might be able to notch a victory over a naval combat vessel but will most likely pay a price in notoriety and eventual capture. Should they go that route, Layercake, on page 233, awaits them.

INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

Numerous agencies, notably the Imperial Naval Intelligence (INI), Imperial Army Intelligence (IAI) and Scout Service Intelligence have agents and intel operations running throughout the Core. Most, if not all, should have at least passing knowledge of the notorious Travellers. If they are spotted in a system, as described in Shaking Enemies off Their Tail on page 214, then they are assigned a tail or even an entire cell of spies to watch over them.

Despite their association with the navy, the INI does not always have assets that can easily track the Travellers over interstellar distances. If the Travellers leave the system, they will probably lose their tail. However, any agent or cell following the Travellers will file a report and send it by encrypted Express Boat message to all surrounding systems within four parsecs.

Spies from the Scout Service have a significantly better ability to track them from system-to-system. The primary tool for this is their fleet of Detached Duty scout ships. On any system with a Class D starport or above, roll 6+ on 2D to determine if there is a scout ship present that their intel unit can use. They will either commandeer the ship for the mission or hire the crew if the ex-scouts among them are deemed trustworthy. The long arm of the Scout Service extends over the entire Imperium thanks to the ubiquitous presence of Detached Duty ships.

MERCENARIES

Mercenary units often pose a greater threat of exposure to the Travellers because of how well-travelled they are. Imperial Army units tend to be linked to their homeworld, rarely leaving except for joint-training exercises, deployments and recruitment missions. Mercenary units on the other hand, have often taken tickets on multiple systems, making them more knowledgeable about what is happening across a broader interstellar swath. If the Travellers have been involved in a noteworthy affair in a system where a mercenary unit was operating, they may well remember them.

ASSEMBLY

The structure of this adventure is unorthodox. It is not designed as a series of events that may be played in linear order, one leading to the next until the adventure is complete. Assembly is the story of how the Travellers build the Determinism Engine, a sandbox-style adventure that encompasses all of the Core.

A successful Determinism Engine prototype has many factors, each of which the Travellers must consider. There are risks and rewards for each and they will be forced to decide which characteristics they want to include and which they can forego.

The Determinism Engine can extend beyond the Core's borders if the Referee desires but for the sake of this adventure it is supposed that only Core worlds are included. If the Travellers wish to extend their Determinism Engine network into other sectors, a tool such as travellermap.com will be required. Travellermap contains a complete database and graphical representation of all official and unofficial sectors in the Charted Space universe. Use it to see the Core's neighbouring sectors, where the Travellers might want to install additional Determinism Engine nodes.

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

The following sections describe the various aspects of a Determinism Engine deployment and their effects on its operation.

CONSCIOUS INTELLIGENCE NODES

Each node in the Determinism Engine must have a conscious intelligence at its core. There are three types of conscious intelligence that the Travellers can provide:

- **Seed of Guun:** Naalir can install an egg-and-lattice structure that incubates and produces a TL17–18 conscious intelligence like Naalir but without its advanced processing multiplier.
- **Modified CI:** The Core's CIs are described in Conscious Intelligence Projects on page 13 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. Each of these may be converted into Seeds of Guun with a process similar to the Reverie. This takes more time but the result is a strong node.
- **Modified AI:** An advanced artificial intelligence system of TL15–16 can be modified to perform most of the tasks of an unmodified CI. These will comprise the weakest of the nodes but are relatively easy to build. Modified AIs may not be converted into Seeds of Guun.

Naalir itself may serve as a node and a powerful one it will be. It is the only known conscious intelligence of its kind, TL18 with the addition of its unique advanced processing multiplier giving it godlike intelligence. Locating Naalir near the centre of the Determinism Engine network will enable them to make optimal use of its capabilities. Hops of up to 20 parsecs can be configured in multiple directions.

The technology to create advanced processing multipliers eludes Naalir, the technique and process lost among the artefacts of its creators. Perhaps the Travellers can search for it among the ruins they have found. There might be new discoveries to be made, new archaeological digs to be launched. Were they to find a way to reproduce it, each node could be made equal to Naalir, enabling them to create a truly powerful Determinism Engine with fewer nodes but an order of magnitude more powerful.

Exotic materials are drawn from asteroid belts, gas giant rings, egg-shell planets and protoplanetary discs. These materials are difficult to come by and require special expeditions and starships to extract. An industrial belt mining ship or platform would be useful for this.

Egg-shell planets are small worlds and gas giant moons with thin crusts that make it easy to get to the metals in their mantles. Protoplanetary discs may be found in empty hexes in the abysses between stars. For more information, refer to Protostar Systems on page 224 of the *World Builder's Handbook*.

Node Type	Materials Required	Cost	Construction Time	Effectiveness
Naalir	—	—	—	24
Seed of Guun	Exotic	MCr100	2D3 weeks	12
Modified CI	TL13–15 Industrial Worlds	MCr50	3D weeks	8
Modified AI	TL12+ Industrial Worlds	MCr10	1D3 weeks	2

BERENJI MOBILE MINING PLATFORM

The Berenji is a common sight in the Core. Wherever there are asteroid belts or mineral-rich gas giant moons, spacecraft of this type may be found. The class features an economical design with a non-gravity hull to reduce costs. Only the common area, staterooms and bridge have artificial gravity. Cutters with specially outfitted cargo transport modules do much of the ore collection in concert with the mothership's mining drones. An autopilot flies the ship using predetermined flight plans that have been configured by its parent corporation. The astrogator doubles as the captain of the ship.

TL12		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	5,000 tons, Dispersed Structure, Non-Gravity	—	63.6625
M-Drive	Thrust 1 (energy inefficient)	50	75
J-Drive	Jump 1 (energy inefficient)	130	146.25
Power Plant	Fusion (TL 12), Power 1,200	80	80
Fuel Tanks	J-1, 12 weeks of operation	524	—
Bridge	Small Bridge	40	12.5
Computer	Computer/5	—	0.03
Sensors	Improved	3	4.3
	Mineral Detection Suite	1	5
Craft	Docking Spaces (50 tons) x4	220	55
	Modular Cutters x4	—	47.72
Systems	Medical Bay	4	2
	Fuel Processor (20 tons/day)	1	0.05
	Mining Drones x50	100	10
	Tow Cable	50	0.25
	Heavy Grappling Arm	6	3
	Cargo Scoop	2	0.5
	Workshops x2	12	1.8
Station	Mineral Refinery (improved, 20 tons/day)	20	20
Staterooms	Standard x11	44	5.5
Software	Manoeuvre	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/1	—	0.1
	Virtual Crew/0	—	1
Common Areas		9	0.9
Cargo	Cargo Space	3,708	—

Crew

Astrogator, Engineers x7, General Crew, Maintenance x5, Administrators x2, Modular Cutter Pilots x4, Medic, Officer

Hull: 1,800

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

Cr44314/month

PURCHASE COST

MCr531.7625

Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems
500

Manoeuvre Drive
650

Jump Drive
650

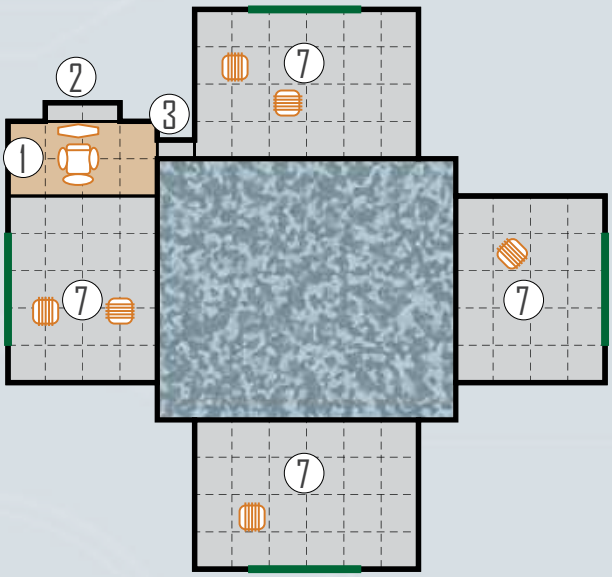
Sensors
4

Fuel Processor
1

Medical Bay
1

Mineral Refinery
40

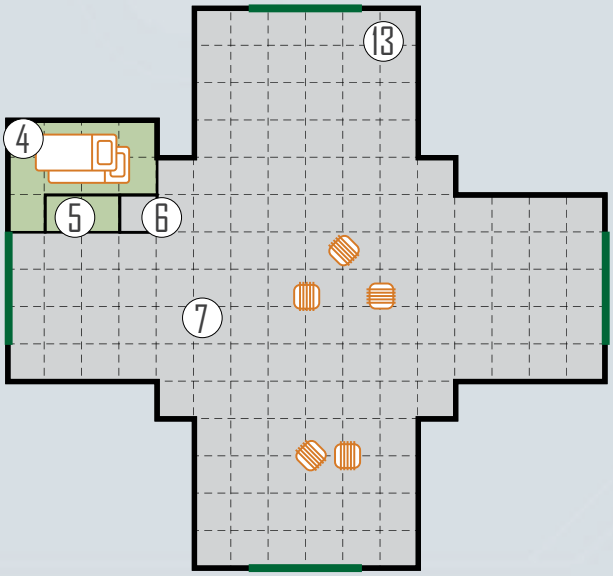
BERENJI MOBILE MINING PLATFORM



DECK 4

LEGEND

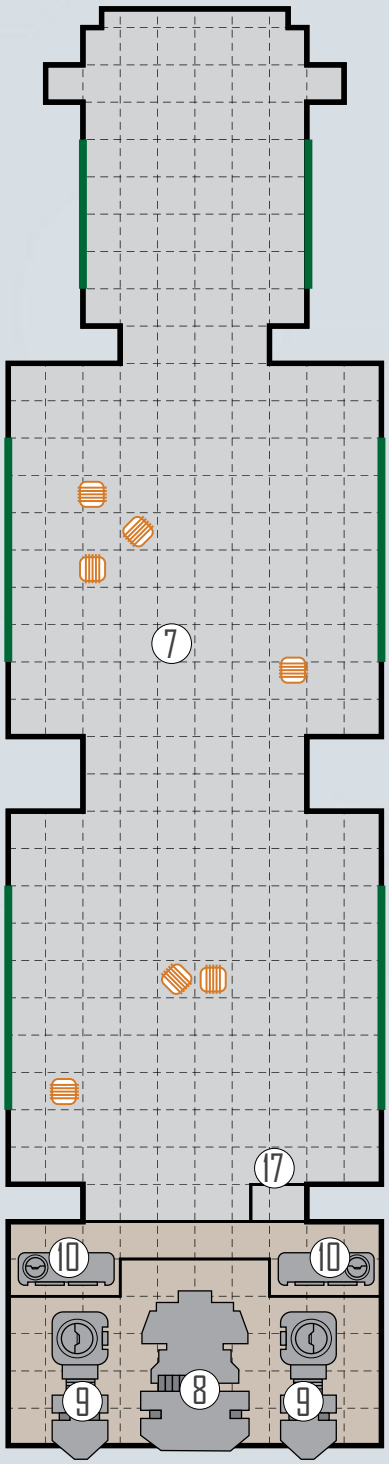
1. Bridge
2. Sensors
3. Fuel processor
4. Staterooms
5. Common areas
6. Medical bay
7. Cargo



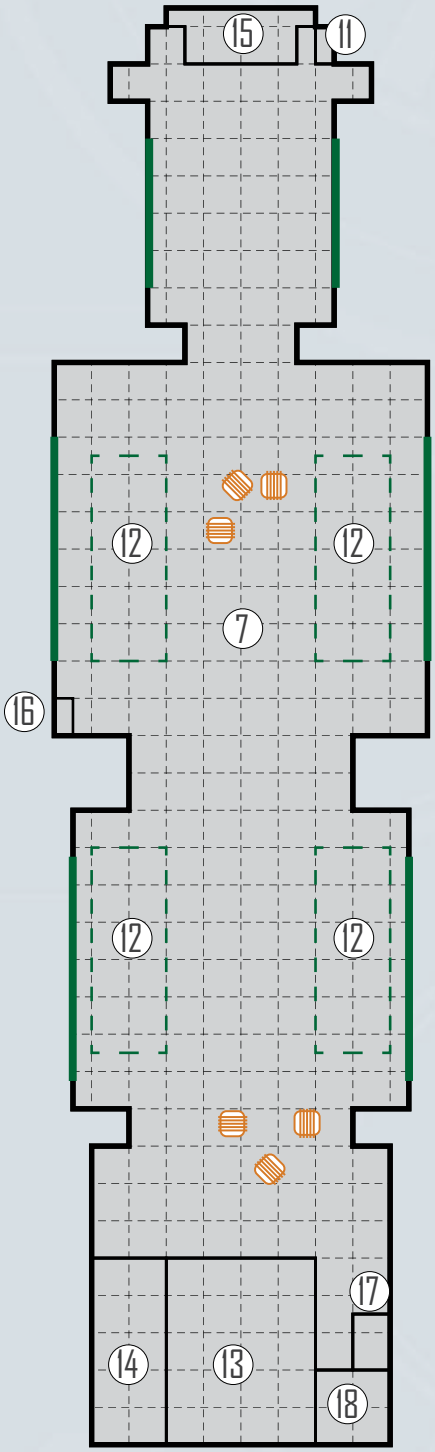
DECK 3

1 square = 5 Tons

8. M-drive
9. J-drive
10. Power plant
11. Mineral detection suite
12. Docking spaces (modular cutters)
13. Mining drones
14. Tow cable
15. Heavy grappling arm
16. Cargo scoop
17. Workshops
18. Mineral refinery



DECK 2



DECK 1

1 square = 5 Tons

DISTANCE

The distance between nodes is important. If the network were built entirely of Naalir-like CIs, complete with advanced processing multipliers, each node could be spaced 20 parsecs apart and the system would operate at 100% efficiency. With the tools at hand, the efficiency is lower but may be enhanced by arranging more nodes in closer proximity.

Conscious Intelligence Nodes

Node Type	Optimal Distance	Fidelity Loss
Naalir	20 parsecs	25%/5 parsecs
Seed of Guun	10 parsecs	25%/3 parsecs
Modified CI	6 parsecs	50%/parsec
Modified AI	2 parsecs	50%/parsec

Node Type on the Conscious Intelligence Nodes table lists the CI or AI being deployed. Optimal Distance is the greatest distance a node may be from other nodes without degradation of performance. Node overlap and redundancy can address this issue but if no alterations are made there can be pockets of variability that hinder optimal operation. Fidelity Loss is per a specific number of parsecs. For example, if a Seed of Guun is 13 parsecs from the next node, it suffers a 25% decline in efficiency, 50% percent at 16 parsecs and so on.

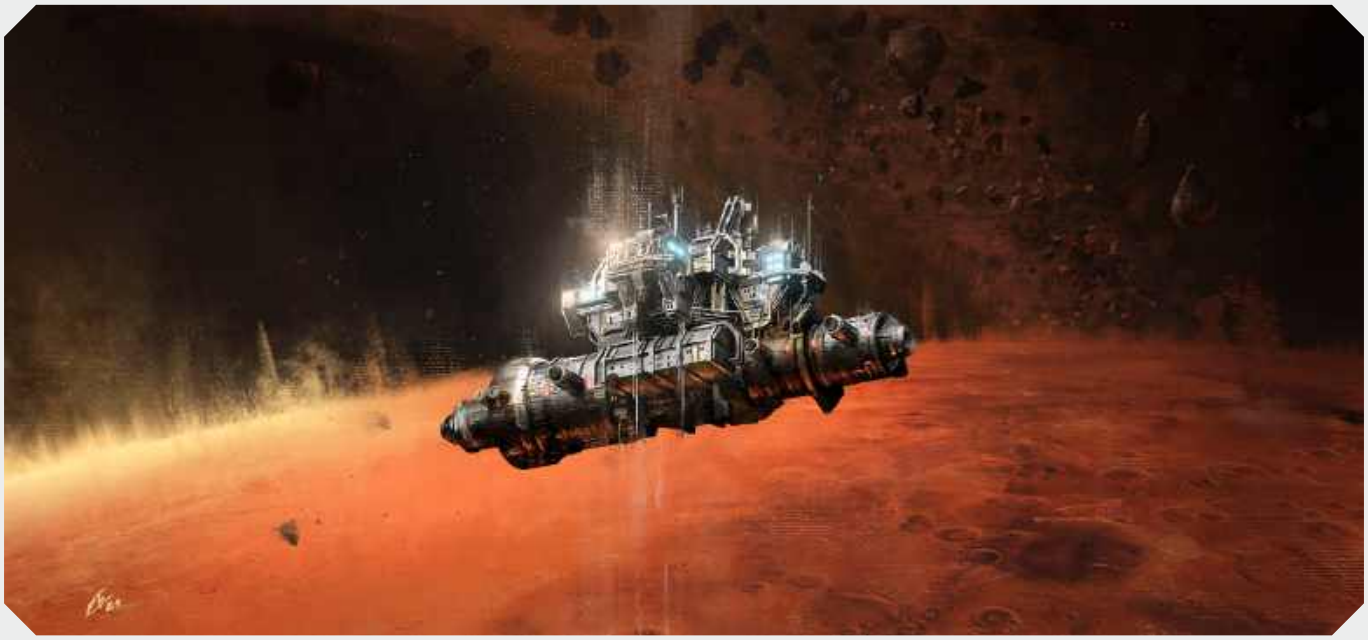
Node Map

For example, if one of the two nodes between Diam Kani and Mirezi is a Seed of Guun, then there is 100% efficiency between those two nodes. However, the distance between Diam Kani and Kirbarus is seven parsecs. If the nodes are Modified CIs, then they lose 50% fidelity, making the hop lossy. Further reinforcement with additional nodes in the area would have to be established to ensure proper operation. Nevertheless, the hop serves a purpose if it maintains a continuous web of nodes.

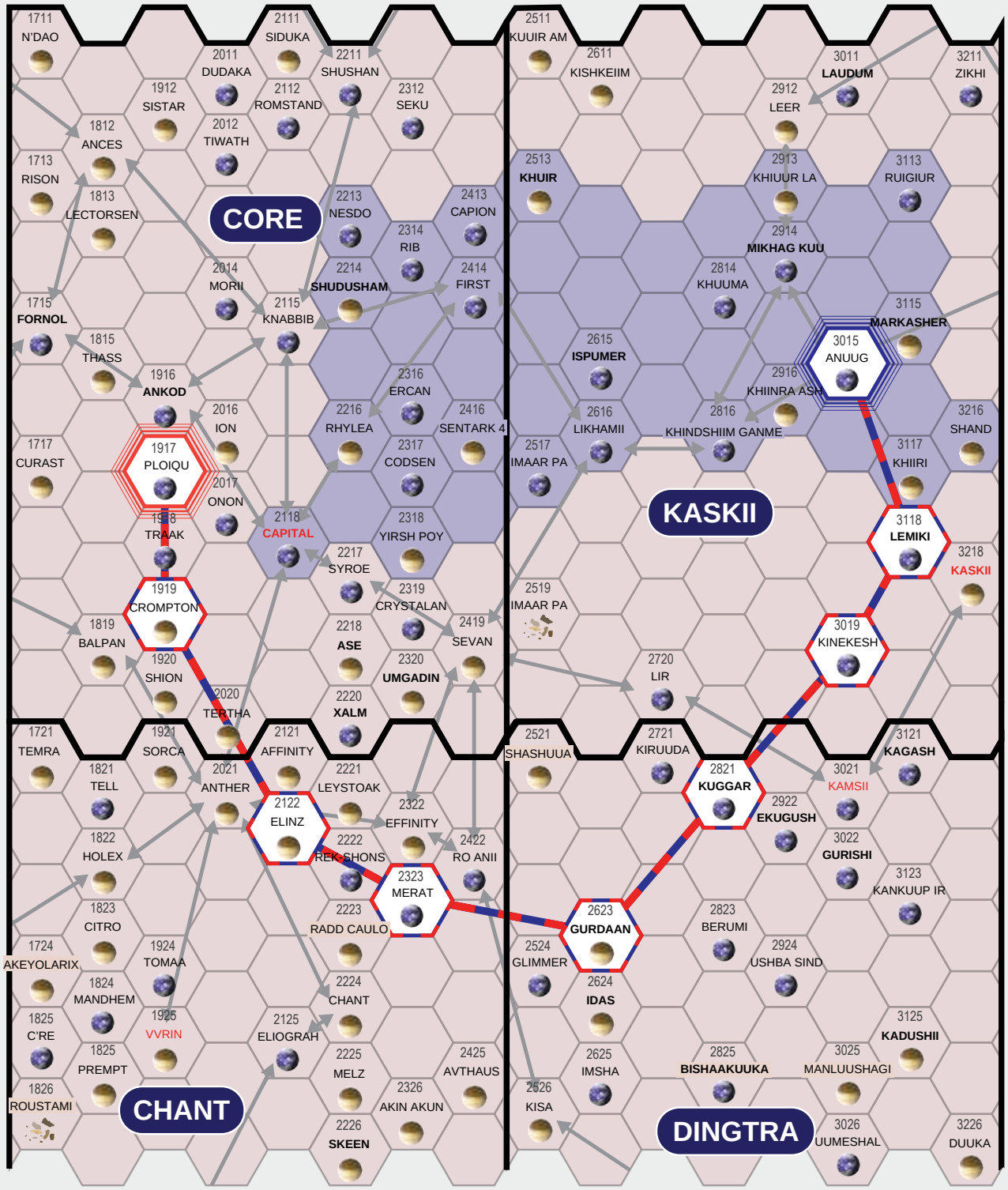
For the Determinism Engine to work, full coverage is required, lossy or not, but for optimal operation, each node must be within the prescribed optimal range for proper data analysis and communication.

EVENTS, PERSPECTIVES AND ARCS

The Determinism Engine predicts Events which are perceived at Perspectives along Arcs. An Event occurs at a specific location; for example, a scandal, naval assault, terrorist attack, insurrection, new dance trend or other noteworthy news event. Perspectives, one or more parsecs distant, are locations where those Events can be predicted by data consumed by the Determinism Engine. Arcs, measured in parsecs, are wide swaths of space between an Event and a Perspective.



DETERMINISM ENGINE NODE MAP



Effectiveness is scored from the perspective of each node and the chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Therefore, when the flow of analysis passes through a lossy node, it suffers by receiving less Effectiveness. There are two important locations on the starmap: the Event and the Perspective. The Event is where something happens that the Determinism Engine is capable of predicting. For example, a terrorist attack might be about to happen on Uundizi but it is important that someone on Sketola knows about it. If all Determinism Engine nodes between the Event and Perspective in an arc six parsecs wide are 100% efficient, then Effectiveness 12 is scored. If there is a loss of 25% on one system within that arc, Effectiveness 10 is scored. If there is a loss of 50% within the arc, it will be Effectiveness 8. If there is more than one system within the arc with any lossiness, only Effectiveness 4 is received. In all cases, it is assumed that full coverage has been established.

WAY STATION PRESENCE

The ability to transmit information to key worlds is an important factor in the construction of the Determinism Engine. The conscious intelligence nodes collect and analyse data but that data must then be distributed. Naalir has mastered the intricacies of the Express Boat Network and while a far more efficient transmission method must be devised in the future, for now it is the best thing they have. Within Imperial space, Express Boat routes are ubiquitous but the key component to the distribution of Determinism Engine information are the scout way stations. The way stations are communications hubs that are ideal for the dissemination of information over a broad swath of Imperial worlds.

There must be at least one node within six parsecs of a way station. If this requirement is met, Effectiveness 12 is awarded. If there are no way stations within six parsecs of all nodes between an Event and a Perspective, Effectiveness 6 is awarded. The information still gets to its destination but the circuitous route that it takes through the Express Boat Network and other avenues is less direct and therefore performs at a degraded level.

EFFECTIVENESS POINTS

Add the total Effectiveness to evaluate the quality of a node hop. For example, a perfect hop would include the following factors:

Naalir (Effectiveness 24) > Seed of Guun (Effectiveness 12) at a distance of 20 or fewer parsecs with an unimpeded arc (Effectiveness 12) with a way station within six parsecs (Effectiveness 12) for a total Effectiveness 60. A lesser hop, perhaps using a modified AI at more than its maximum distance, results in less analytical efficiency and detail.

MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

To realise the potential of Naalir and the Determinism Engine, the Travellers have to do the unthinkable: they must shatter the status quo. The Third Imperium is a feudal state, with its power vested in the Emperor. Use of that power is limited by interstellar distances and the abilities of jump technology. The Emperor cannot be everywhere at once, so he exercises power through a widespread bureaucracy, trusted to act with duty, honour and to serve as the Emperor's voice in his absence.

If one were to eliminate the need for a bureaucracy, or vastly reduce its duties, what use would there be for an Emperor? The advent of the Determinism Engine, conscious intelligences in advisory roles and the hop drive will eliminate the need for both Emperor and nobility. Naalir does not dictate what should happen to these roles. They could become ceremonial, a remnant of the Imperium's 1,000-year history, or disappear altogether, an unnecessary vestige of the past. Changes of this magnitude are not accepted easily. Entrenched power is difficult to extricate but the Emperor and his nobility face a quandary – if they do not embrace the new technology, they risk falling behind competing polities that do. Whether they accept and incorporate the new technology might be irrelevant. They will become obsolete regardless.

While this might appear obvious to some, it is not in the nature of Humaniti, nor many other starfaring species to accept change lightly even when there are consequences to pay. They say one should not kill the messenger but history is rife with moments where exactly that has happened

To summarise, it will be difficult for the Travellers to accomplish a task that causes fear among an entrenched elite. They will have to find ways to avoid or otherwise overcome the agencies who possess power and enforce laws.

UNBEATABLE FOES

The Third Imperium has lasted for over 1,000 years, held together by several forces which have proven quite durable. The nobility, free trade and the military – most notably the Imperial Navy, arguably the most powerful fighting force in Charted Space.

Each of these agencies poses a threat to the Travellers in their quest to build the Determinism Engine.

IMPERIAL NAVY

As powerful as it is, the seemingly ubiquitous Imperial Navy cannot be everywhere at once. It falls upon the Travellers to determine where they are, what they are doing and how best to avoid them.

The Imperial Navy is divided into sector fleets and numbered fleets. Sector fleets are naval assets that serve as the defence of a sector of space or the Imperium at large. Sector fleets consist of the largest ships in the navy; the dreadnoughts, battleships and heavy carriers, enormous ships with astounding destructive power. The numbered fleets are assigned at the subsector level, comprising cruisers, carriers, destroyers, frigates and smaller patrol craft. Each subsector also has a colonial fleet, composed of older, less capable ships that nonetheless have great utility for the navy. For a detailed description of the composition of naval fleets and squadrons, refer to *The Third Imperium* or *Imperial Navy*.

For the purposes of this adventure, all the Referee needs to know is that the sector fleets are neither likely to pose a threat to the Travellers nor become involved in their lives. Sector fleets are either fighting wars or preparing to do so. Their role is power projection and they leave smaller jobs to the numbered and colonial fleets. The numbered fleets, however, have a much greater presence and likely to have a casual – if not intrusive – presence. They patrol worlds within Imperial borders, client states on the frontiers and trade lanes where Imperial mercantile ships that travel beyond the Imperium, doing trade with foreign polities. The ships of the numbered fleets, colonial fleets and planetary navies are those with whom the Travellers are far more likely to interact. Avoiding contact with them is difficult, if not impossible, but there are things that can be done to mitigate encounters with the Imperial Navy as they work to build the Determinism Engine, despite the fears it engenders in both the military and bureaucracy.

Avoid Naval Bases: The navy is concentrated at worlds where there are naval bases and avoiding those will reduce contact but by no means do they limit patrols to worlds where there are bases. The navy consistently patrols all Imperial space and, when necessary, the empty space between systems.

Dock at Downports: On worlds without bases, the Imperial Navy will more likely be encountered in space than on the ground. When on patrol in a system with no naval base, their ships are more likely to dock at highports if they dock at all. The naval standard is jump-4, so if they still have liquid hydrogen in the tank, they might not dock at all. By making one's way from jump point to planetside, dodging patrols and skipping the highport, the chance for contact and inspection is reduced.

Alternative Spaceports and Refuelling: Naval ships will concentrate patrols and docking manoeuvres at the system mainworld. If there are spaceports or outposts elsewhere in a star system, these can be used in lieu of the mainworld starport. Likewise, they can perform wilderness refuelling at gas giants, comets or bodies of water or ice on outsystem planets. Of course, the navy also uses gas giants for refuelling but they will tend to use the refuelling resource closest to the mainworld. If there are multiple gas giants or other sources further from the mainworld, these will be less used, making them more viable for Travellers who want to keep a low profile.

Avoid Getting Known: Using more than one ship can keep the navy from identifying travel patterns. If the Travellers follow a familiar path and are seen multiple times entering and exiting the same system, with the same flight plan, flying the same ship, they are more likely to get picked up by naval analytics, which will mark them for inspection. Avoid being predictable. Use more than one ship and always have a cover story to explain the frequent presence of the ship in each system.

Use Stealth: Advanced stealth makes a ship virtually invisible to other space traffic; however, most Imperial Navy ships are TL15 and many have advanced sensors. Their sensor operators are competent, if not expert. Therefore, stealth does not always prevail. Use it sparingly and maintain distance to enhance success.

The Imperial Navy might seem to be everywhere but space is big. They cannot cover everything and a clever group of Travellers can identify and exploit gaps to reduce inspections and make their lives easier. If they do catch the interest of the navy, and their actions seem suspicious in spite of the fact that random inspections do not turn up evidence of foul play, the Travellers could attract the attention of Imperial Naval Intelligence. See The Opposition on page 215 for more information about INI and other notable intelligence agencies.

PLANETARY NAVIES

Many worlds have their own navies. These can consist of anything from jump-capable ships (usually in the sub-1,000 ton range) to system defence boats, fighters or even a few armed ship's boats. Generally, these craft will be of lower Tech Level and therefore easier to evade if that is the Travellers' goal. However, they might have established relationships with some worlds via the Allies and Contacts made on the *Ventura Fortuna*. These may be leveraged for easier access and reduced or no inspections.

To expediate customs checks and inspections by a planetary navy: Difficult (10+) Admin check (SOC). Success earns a one-time pass. Effect +6 earns permanent expedited status, allowing Travellers to forego inspections unless there is an obvious reason to have one. For example, news gets out that the Travellers had a run-in with system defence forces in a neighbouring system.

Keep in mind that one of the Travellers was knighted in Act 1. They might have even been made a baron. By leveraging their noble title, they can acquire expedited status with several worlds on the periphery of their fief. If they have also established a presence on Capital, voting at the Moot, they might be able to extend this good will to the Imperial throneworld as well.

IMPERIAL ARMY

The Imperial Army is not as commonly encountered as the navy but when they are present they are found in large numbers. The job of the army is to defend a world from invasion, keep the peace, and – when used as an invading force – establish control. Armies hold conquered territory, usually coming in after elite forces or marines have spearheaded the assault.

On worlds with Government and Law Levels of 10 or below, the army does not generally have an overbearing presence. On most other worlds, the army may be found on bases, separate from the civilian population. Worlds with Government code 6 (captive government) and worlds with Law Level 10+, will often have a much more visible and potentially intrusive presence. On such worlds, the army can be ubiquitous, with large forces present in all cities, where they manage checkpoints and guard installations, often crossing paths with the population. The Travellers can expect to be stopped, questioned, inspected and potentially arrested if they have violated (or are *suspected* to have violated) any laws.

Prevent army or police forces from arresting the Travellers for a suspected violation or petty crime: Difficult (10+) Advocate check (SOC). Success enables the Travellers to go free after paying a fine of Cr100 x 2D. Effect +3 gets them off without a fine. Effect +6 gets them off scot-free and prevents similar confrontations from occurring for the duration of their visit.

Captive governments are the possession of another star system. See the Government and Law Level codes of the owning system to get a sense of what might be in store for the Travellers on captive worlds. If the owning world has a high Law Level, expect the occupying army to have a more pervasive presence. Note that captive worlds have their own Law Levels, which are likely to differ from that of the owning world. This indicates social and cultural differences between the two and can reflect the level of intrusiveness of the captive government. For example, if the Law Level is several points lower than that of the owning world, there is a level of trust that precludes the need for an intrusive occupying army.

Some captive governments are not owned by another world and are designated as having military rule. This indicates that the military runs the government. It might be that the world is also occupied by peacekeeping forces. They might be present to quell unrest, put down an insurrection, or manage the transition to a new government.

The degree to which an army's presence affects the Travellers largely depends on whether their actions attract undue attention. Building the Determinism Engine can easily be done beneath the army's notice on worlds with Government and Law Levels below 10.

Imperial Army Intelligence is run a bit differently than other intelligence agencies. Each branch is co-located with its individual army division and focuses primarily on events taking place on the world where they are stationed. IAI teams are not entirely isolated and they often cooperate – or compete – with neighbouring worlds within one to six parsecs, each of whom in turn interacts with their neighbouring branches. The collective works together, somewhat inefficiently at times, to produce a mosaic of local affairs. The Imperial office of Combined Intelligence provides venues through which the intelligence agencies of the various services may interact. Many INI bureau chiefs like to cherry pick data from IAI files but the reverse is far less common.

The Travellers probably need not worry much about the IAI unless they attract their attention. Should this occur, IAI will then share the information with local law enforcement agencies who may use the data to question, detain or arrest the Travellers if they are seen to be doing something suspicious.

Refer to Encounters With the Imperial Army on page 27 of *The Third Imperium* for more information.

IMPERIAL INTERSTELLAR SCOUT SERVICE

The Scout Service manages the fabric of the Imperium, making and revising surveys, running its communications network and exploring worlds beyond the borders. The scouts do not pose the threat that the Imperial Navy does, as its fleet is not designed for offensive purposes, having few warships. Those they do have largely been converted for exploration or diplomatic missions.

The intelligence branch is second to none and more pervasive than that of any other service. Imperial Naval Intelligence might have the uniforms and the reputation but the scouts have the intel... on everyone. Most of the data the Scout Service collects is accumulated passively. The Express Boat Network carries the vast majority of information between Imperial worlds. By some measures, well over 90% of all interstellar data transmitted passes through the mail arrays of the Communications Branch of the Scout Service.

The other collection source for the scouts is their fleet of detached duty scout/couriers. These ships are given to retired scouts for their use provided they answer the call should the scouts require their services. Once a scout, always a scout. As their ships ply the space lanes, they passively collect data in every system they visit. Handy, compact scout/couriers are taken virtually *everywhere*. One sees them parked at starports, landed on random asteroids, skimming gas giants, converted for use as belters or mercenary ships, parked in random spots on wild, unexplored worlds and just about anywhere else one can imagine. This enables them to collect data that no one else is getting. As such, Travellers should view these ships as potential spies wherever they come across them. The data they collect eventually makes it into the databases of the IISS, where artificially intelligent analytics examines the content and determines its value. If the Travellers are viewed doing something unusual, something worthy of notice, it will make its way up the chain to scout analysts who share the data with their sister services.

Over the course of this campaign, Naalir and the Travellers have co-opted the use of Scout Service assets. It is ironic that the same service might do them in using nothing but passive sensor devices.

THE NOBILITY

The nobility do not make exceptional spies but they are virtually everywhere in the Imperium. Almost every populated world has noble representation from a lowly knight to an exalted duke. Nobles are focused on the administration of the Imperium. They are the Emperor's voice away from Capital and intended to represent him by ensuring that the worlds under their influence pay their taxes, observe Imperial law and permit the free flow of trade. On any world where the Travellers plan to build a Determinism Engine node, it is possible for the local noble to find out.

The Travellers have an Imperial knight among them (potentially a baron), giving the unique ability to influence events and negotiate with their peers when building the Determinism Engine. If they can gain favour at court (or the Moot Tower as the case may be), then they can build at least some of their nodes with impunity. Making friends among the peerage and obtaining permission to build nodes on their worlds, might enable the Travellers to get much of the job done without conflict. If they dare, they might even present the project to the Moot, inevitably putting it before the Emperor. Depending on how good they are at diplomacy, this could either get them a contract to create the prototype Determinism Engine, or it could get them thrown in prison (see Layercake on page 233). They should tread lightly where necessary but be bold where they can.

The Travellers have seen nobles with agendas that do not entirely jibe with the political goals of the Imperium. Consider the Duchess Colyere Hajesta daMae of Aursis, who built a micro empire within the borders of the Core. Do the Travellers have the ability to do the same? If they have the courage and will, they might be able to sell the value of their grand project, carefully dodging the political bullets of enemies who would label them insurrectionists and traitors. It will be a challenging task but leveraging their role among the nobility, coupled with political, underworld, influencer and wealthy allies and contacts, might enable them to get the momentum they need to get the project off the ground.

ADVANTAGES THE TRAVELLERS HAVE

Building the Determinism Engine is a mammoth undertaking, one that will require persistence, diligence, creativity and patience. The construction of each node will face different challenges but going into this adventure, the Travellers have acquired many advantages to get the job done.

Some of these are inherent to the project. The dispersed nature of the Determination Engine is both advantage and disadvantage. It is advantageous in that any opposition they face cannot undo or destroy their work without a great deal of effort. They must find suitable locations, build nodes, establish connections to way stations and initiate the device from a central location. However, the Travellers cannot be everywhere at once. As they build their network, keeping all of its components safe and operational might prove difficult unless they can find allies to protect what they have built.

Once they have successfully demonstrated the Determinism Engine proof of concept, it might be seen as a valuable asset... or a weapon. Depending on when Wild Strain is run, Naalir's role in its defeat might empower the Travellers to show the value of conscious intelligence as a weapon that the Imperium cannot do without. Advancements in technology are changing the Imperium. With Naalir's help, it has the opportunity to be on the cutting edge of a technology that no one else has. Squandering that advantage would be foolish but reactionary forces will try.

Using technological and political tools, the Travellers can hide in plain sight. Their actions have caught the interest of the Imperial Quarantine Agency and Imperial intelligence agencies but rank-and-file citizens might know very little or nothing at all about them. The Determinism Engine need not be located on the most populous systems as long as it has access to detailed information about the goings-on within Charted Space. In addition to predicting likely futures, it analyses information and uses it to provide unforeseen competitive advantages, one that could be used to further Imperial interests.

The Travellers have been witness to many of the gears, bells and whistles that make the Imperium tick. In addition to its strengths, they have seen its glaring weaknesses. Exposing these and casting light on what could be a better way can work to their advantage.

Renegade Military Institutions: Paranoia among the armed forces – particularly reactionary forces like the Imperial Quarantine Agency – make them too likely to shoot first and ask questions later. Letting them loose on a system could generate sympathy among the masses might create momentum against them. If Quarantine destroys a world under false pretences, all the Travellers need do is expose it, divulging the dangers it poses and thereby lowering confidence in one of the Imperium's key institutions. Quarantine is closely associated with the Imperial Navy and making a villain out of one or both can swing things to the Travellers' side.

The Cultural Zones: The Travellers had the opportunity to advocate for the creation of a new cultural zone, the Chanestin Kingdom. If they opted not to, or failed to do so, they still have seen the fractures that undergird the Imperium. The Cultural Zones that already exist are a threat to the cohesion of the empire. Each was granted as an accommodation, not because the Imperium *wanted* to but because it *had* to. The advent of the Determinism Engine can allow for the individuality desired by cultural enclaves, divergent human species and ethnicities, without giving up the integrity and stability of the Imperium as a whole.

Corruption: If the criminal empires of the Shinkan syndicates were not evidence enough, the Travellers have seen how powerful nobles with activist agendas collect proxy votes to create an outsized influence in the Moot. Smugglers, pirates, micro-empires, larceny, exploitation and countless other offences are carried about by systems that openly thwart the dictates of the Imperium but do not pay the consequences because they have something to offer: riches, political leverage, power. Not everything functions as neatly and tidily as the Imperium would like its citizens to think.

Consciousness Transfer: The Travellers can be many places at once. They must be cautious when using the technology in the Core. Use of clones with this technology is highly illegal due to laws put in place by Paulo II (Strephon's father). Also, keep in mind that if their embodiments encounter each other, there can be problems. See page 82 in the *Singularity Sourcebook*. When they were operating throughout the Imperium, there was little opportunity for them to run into each other, but within the Core there is some risk of it happening.

Hop Drive: Presumably, the Travellers have given the prototype ship they used during Engine of the Ancients back to the Jumpspace Institute and Research Station Zeta, but Naalir now knows how it works and can reproduce the technology with the assistance of Mother at Ye-lu.

EVENTS, ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

As they build the Determinism Engine, the Travellers face several obstacles. The following scenarios may be used to help flesh out the adventures they have as they travel the Core, installing nodes. These fall into three categories: Events, Encounters and Challenges.

Events may be used on multiple worlds within the Core. Some are world-specific and others are designed to be used in sandbox fashion, so the Travellers may select where they want to install nodes without input from the Referee. Encounters are specific individuals or groups they meet as they travel the Core. Challenges are problems the Travellers face and guidance on how they might be overcome.

EVENT: THE PSYCHOHISTORIAN CONFLICT

World: Starport A-C, Population 6+

Psychohistorians have played a role in Imperial politics from the beginning. Cleon I used them as trusted advisors when he laid the groundwork for transforming the Sylean Federation into the Third Imperium. As the Travellers install a node on this world, they are confronted by a psychohistorian sect that decries Naalir as a 'false prophet'. They, too, predict disaster for the Imperium and by extension, all of Charted Space, but they believe that the pulsating historical threads

of civilisation and devastation are the natural cycle of sophont life which must not be interfered with, lest it become enslaved by the very technology that it has created... or was gifted, in the case of Naalir.

The sect intends to stop the Travellers from installing the node and hopes to dog their heels wherever they go, preventing them from completing the Determinism Engine.

There are dissident factions among the psychohistorians who believe their sect is corrupted by politics. While it is the job of psychohistorians to examine statistics and use them to predict the future, human bias has crept in. No one wants bad news and the sect has begun to bend its processes to ensure that none of their predictions are overly frightening or apocalyptic, even when statistics say otherwise. It does not serve the Emperor to have doomsayers trolling about, informing the public that war is coming or the empire will fall. High-ranking members of the nobility have been censoring the sect, forcing them to provide two channels of information: one for the public and one for their eyes only.

A group of dissidents approaches the Travellers, seeking their help to expose the censorship. They support the creation of the Determinism Engine and see it as an adjunct to their own studies. Caught in the middle, the Travellers have the chance to gain important allies and quash censorship.

EVENT: SCAVENGER BLUES

World: Starport D-, Population 2-, Law Level 2-, Scout Base present

Seeking a world where they will encounter little interference, the Travellers install a node on a backwater planet, one with a minimalist starport and low population. This has its advantages. There will be little interference with the construction of the node and since there is a scout base present, the node can easily be connected with the Express Boat Network or Imperial Courier Service. However, it is a lawless world, one where anything that is not nailed down often gets vandalised, picked over, scavenged or outright stolen. The Travellers learn this the hard way.

If they leave security measures – holovideo surveillance or motion detectors – they obtain sufficient evidence to capture the thieves. However, if they do not upgrade the system, it is thwarted the next time by a savvier group of burglars who bring anti-surveillance tools and intrusion software to break into the site to get what they want.

Depending on the type of site that it is, the value of salvageable materials varies. Seeds of Guun are constructed of exotic and hard-to-find materials that the Travellers may have worked hard to obtain. These materials are of high value on the black market, which makes it worth the effort.

The Travellers will have to consider moving the site or adding more aggressive security measures, such as armed robots or mercenaries.

ENCOUNTER: DOOMSAYER CULT

World: Starport D-E, Population 4–6, TL8-
An apocalyptic cult that predicts the near-term decline and destruction of the Imperium learns about the Travellers' project and has come to worship the node being installed on their world. Whether it be a Seed of Guun or converted CI or AI, they believe it an idol of the god they worship. They create a community around the node, complete with shrines, a temple and an encampment. It begins to take on the feel of a new village or town with gradual construction of new housing, commercial buildings, roads and other infrastructure. The Travellers might opt to pick up their operation and secretly move it elsewhere, or they might leverage it for more validation. The cultists could provide a layer of protection for the project or might attract unwanted attention.

The majority of cultists follow their priestess, who glorifies the node and identifies it as an important landmark of their religion, but a group of heretics decries it as a false idol and forms a schism within the cult.

ENCOUNTER: THE SYLEAN ORDER

World: Any world where a knight is the ruling noble
A knight of the realm and member of the Sylean Order seeks out the Travellers via their knight. The Sylean Order is not to be confused with the Order of Sylea, which is associated with the Domain that contains the Core. The Sylean Order are ethnic Syleans from the Sylean Worlds Cultural Zone who purport to be agents of change. They have stepped up twice in history, once to support Cleon I and a second time to stand down during the Civil War. For the Third Epoch, as they call it, they are prepared to support the Travellers' efforts to bring Naalir's Determinism Engine online.

Knights of the Sylean Order are all of nearly pure Sylean heritage. See Creating Sylean Travellers on page 171 of *The Third Imperium* for more information. These knights all speak Sylean, a language that is only widely spoken within the Sylean worlds. Membership in the order requires a fluency test in the language.

The Knights of the Sylean Order and their followers will help with site construction, security, maintenance and other services that the Travellers might require. They will expect reasonable compensation for their contributions but it will be notably less than what is charged by other agencies.

Working with the Sylean Order can potentially cause the Travellers problems later on. They have several extreme positions that might affect the Travellers' relationships with other Imperial agencies and individuals. Of note, they have petitioned to shed the Vilani names of worlds within the Sylean Worlds Cultural Zone so they can give them Sylean names.

They are an order of Imperial knights but the schism created by the Third Epoch Movement often puts them at odds with Imperial agencies and other knightly orders. They are avid adopters of technology and eager to see the Determinism Engine built; it is a gift that must not be allowed to fall into enemy hands. While many of their stances on issues reflect those of the Imperium, they hold extremist positions that sometimes jar others.

ENCOUNTER: TOURIST ATTRACTION

World: Starport A–C, Atmosphere 4–9, Population 6+, TL6–10
A commercial real estate developer or an official from a government planning committee approaches the Travellers to request permission to convert the site surrounding the node into a tourist attraction. A museum and gift shop will be built on the periphery of the site and if it is successful there are plans to add an amusement park, restaurants and other attractions. The addition could bring added security and validation to the site, possibly even trustworthy security measures will be put in place, so maintenance of the site might require less overhead from the Travellers.

The site planner hires a writer and holovideography team to interview the Travellers about the journey that has brought them to this moment. They must decide how much detail they want to provide and how much fiction to add to the truth.

Win the public over with a rousing tale of adventure and accomplishment: Average (8+) Carouse or Art (performer) check (2D hours, SOC).

Tell a tall (but convincing) tale that wildly exaggerates the story but makes for great media: Difficult (10+) Deception check (2D hours, INT).

If successful telling either truth or fiction, they can expect to see numerous exhibits, videos and swag that emulates the themes of the story they tell. Media producers are willing to pay 1D x Cr10000 for every hour of quality video that the Travellers may have collected that shows their past exploits.

CHALLENGE: A HOP, SKIP AND A JUMP

World: Pashus, Vincennes, Gannvair, Ye-lu

The Act 2 adventure, Engine of the Ancients, introduces the hop drive to the campaign. This landmark technology gives the Travellers the ability to cover vast expanses of space in a fraction of the time required by jump drives. The inclusion of this technology is a game changer and they might want to continue using it after that adventure ends.

Keeping the prototype is probably out of the question; it is the property of the Jumpspace Institute and Research Station Zeta on Pashus (Deneb 1432, A432455-G) and they are going to want it back. However, there are ways to replicate the technology for future use. Naalir has recorded everything there is to know about the technology. It has the blueprints but not the resources to actually build a hop-capable ship. Moreover, there are no shipyards currently capable of building this cutting-edge technology. Nevertheless, the Travellers have options.

To obtain the materials and tools needed, they can return to Pashus, or travel to Vincennes (Deneb 1122, A899AA6-G) or Gannvair (Fornast 3206, A00025A-G), the Imperium's other TL16 worlds. They can use consciousness transfer or their own bodies, as desired. As for construction of the ship, they might be able to have it done on Pashus or they can use a resources closer to home; the Ye-lu shipyards controlled by Mother, the CI that runs the planet.

If they build the ship at Pashus, the Travellers can create a ship roughly on par with the *Paradigm Shift*, the fully functional hop drive-equipped exploration vessel. If they allow Mother to build it, the result will be more in line with the *Zeta-014* prototype.

CHALLENGE: THE ALUUDI FACTOR

World: Any

In Act 2, Renegade Minds, one of the Travellers' missions took them to the world of Aluudi (Glimmerdrift Reaches 0703, A434985-E) where they were unable to salvage the Aluudians' unique application of artificial intelligence but they might have been able to obtain the algorithm by which Aluudians preserve, store and utilise the consciousnesses of past historical figures. Incorporating this into the Determinism Engine will have an ameliorating effect with many powers of the region.

Adding the element of lost sophont wisdom to an otherwise alien and completely artificial conscious intelligence network will give many people the sense that they are a part of the solution. If the Travellers do not think to use the acquired information, Naalir will suggest it but will solicit their advice on how the technology should be implemented. They are biological sophonts; therefore, Naalir depends upon them to help it create systems that not only work but also accepted by the masses. If implemented in a clever fashion, the Aluudi application could encourage adoption of the Determinism Engine and possibly even make it a point of pride to have a node installed on one's world.

LAYERCAKE

The Travellers are sent to prison on Sher (Core 1519, D9D4665-7) where they are to serve life sentences for treason. They are placed into low berths for transportation to Sher Imperial Prison and when they awaken, they discover that, apparently, they have not been sent to the surface of Sher. They are at a prison known as Asteroid X, a large, solitary, mineral-rich space rock that appears inescapable.

It turns out they are not on an asteroid at all but kept in a state of suspended animation and connected to an elaborate Sim where they are to serve out their sentences. If they do not figure this out for themselves, Naalir, which managed to escape capture, finds ways to communicate with them. With coordination, it can help them break out of the Sim, whereupon they discover that they are on Sher, as originally thought. However, they were being kept in a storage facility, along with two million other inmates, literally suspended on cables and maintained with life support and simulation machinery.

After they escape the Sim, the Travellers must get out of the facility and find a way off planet. The Layercake shows them the extreme lengths the Imperium is willing to go to in order to silence them. The technology they are introducing is dangerous to the status quo and there are many, quite likely including the Emperor, who do not want to see the technology propogate. After they get off Sher, they must take caution, utilise their most powerful allies to ensure security and find a way to prove the worth of Naalir and its Determinism Engine.

Referees should be sure to read Pathways before determining when and how to introduce Layercake to the Travellers. It is intended to be a surprise when they wake up in prison. They will have memories of having been run through a kangaroo court, convicted and transported to the prison. None of this happened. They were arrested, anesthetised and shipped to Sher without trial, at someone's order but the question is… who?

SHER

Most well-populated worlds have prisons or criminal rehabilitation systems of some sort. Crimes are adjudicated by individual worlds without involvement of the Imperial government. However, for criminal offences against the Imperium itself, criminals may be incarcerated at designated prison worlds. Slavers, genocidaires, treason, destruction of Imperial property, terrorism against the Imperial state, prevention of interstellar trade and tax evasion all qualify as offences that can get one a lengthy prison term on official prison worlds or exile camps. Murder is usually handled at the local level unless it occurs on designated Imperial property such as a starship that belongs to the Imperium or a starport. Sentences vary from world-to-world, from hard labour to highly involved therapies and psychological rehabilitation programmes.

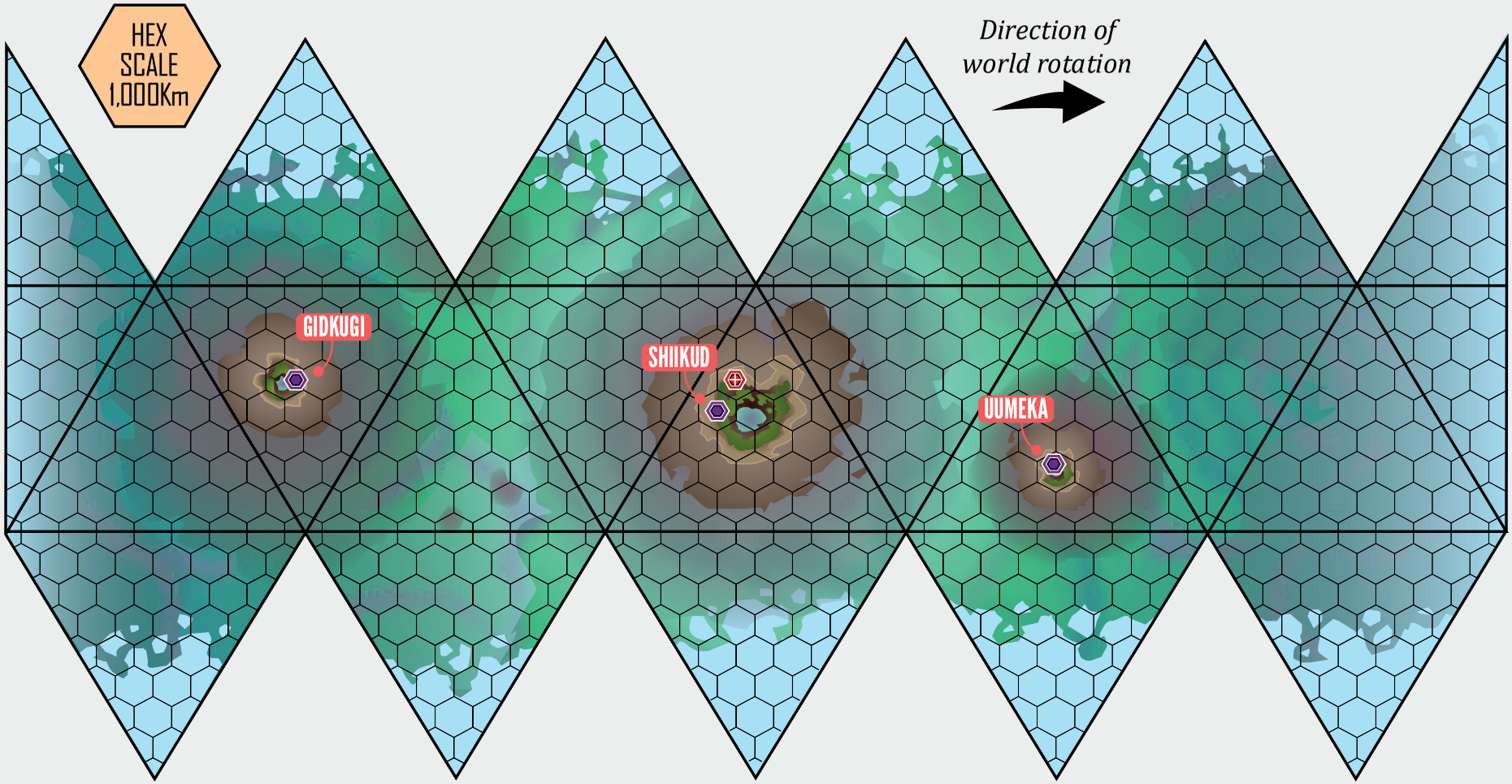
Prison worlds are not selected for their prime locations, pleasant atmospheres, or valuable resources. These are hard worlds with tough and challenging environments. Sher is no exception.

Sher is a large and dense world, located slightly outside the habitable zone of its binary pair of red dwarf stars. Its size and density give it a gravity of 1.15Gs. The majority of the world is covered by a thick, soupy nitrogen-rich atmosphere with liquid methane and ethane oceans. It has few large mountains due to its large size and erosion rate but there are startling features that have given it some unusual topography; three enormous calderas that have defied geological norms, thrusting from deep in the planet's crust, creating a trio of micro-environments unlike the majority of the planet. The Calderas are called Gidkugi, Uumeka and Shiikud. The bowl of each caldera is elevated and has its own atmospheric zone, containing an oxygen-nitrogen mix that is breathable with appropriate gear. It is bitterly cold in each of the calderas but the largest of the three, Shiikud, is warmed by geothermic activity, making it a balmy -80°C. With a filter mask and warm coat, a person could walk outside and allow Sher's cool air to touch their skin without incident. One could also breathe while in Gidkugi or Uumeka but only with cold weather gear for temperatures below -150°C.

There are three prison facilities on Sher, one at each caldera. Shiikud is where the virtual prisoners are kept. Two million are suspended in suspended sleep, their minds stimulated by participation in a series of Sims. Unlike a standard low berth, these allow for a slightly elevated state of consciousness and more physical stimulation. Gidkugi and Uumeka calderas contain traditional facilities where the other four million prisoners are incarcerated.

SHER

UWP: A86A56A-F



Settlements

Starport

Sher is located a single parsec from Depot (Core 1518, A86A56A-F), which puts it right next to one of the most militarised worlds in all of Charted Space. Routine patrols out of Depot resupply Sher with supplies from the Sylean Main. Sher is a wholly owned possession of Temra (Core 1721, B565886-A), where the prison's administrative offices and primary supply operations reside.

JUST DESSERTS

Sher is the name of the world but its meaning becomes important in this adventure. It is the Vilani word for dessert, an after-dinner treat made with sugars and fats, with pleasing textures and bright colours. On Vland, where the art of Shugilii began, *khinan sha* was a popular sher. While there is no direct translation, 'layer cake' is reasonably accurate: a delicious stack of colourful torts, each themselves layered with a soft interior, covered in a moist outer blanket that is even sweeter. Traditional *khinan sha* have decorative designs, placed on an edible outer shell that cover all or part of the softer interior. The outer layers were meant to conceal secrets within. One quadrant might have fresh fruit, another a custard and another still might have decorative flair such as a rainbow or metallic hue. Many Shugilii insist that the dessert, popular at weddings, anniversaries and coming-of-age parties, was a metaphor for the variety of life. Others say the Vilani just like surprises.

The prison in which the Travellers have been incarcerated is called Khinan Sha. What wonders, surprises and varieties it must have in store for them.

ASTEROID X

The Travellers awaken from cold sleep, imprisoned for the crime of treason at an Imperial Court on Temra. Each of them has implanted memories of their trial. The mountain of evidence presented portrayed them as insurrectionists who intended to use a renegade conscious intelligence to overthrow the Imperial government. Depending on the Travellers' disposition, this might be true. They might be of the opinion that the Emperor and nobility should be overthrown or, at the very least, made obsolescent after the introduction of the Determinism Engine. Alternatively, they may merely be following through on their commitment to Naalir with the belief that the CI can improve life in the Imperium with no designs on the existing government whatsoever. They might even see the advancement of Naalir and its Determinism Engine as an opportunity to *enhance* the prospects of the Emperor and his nobles. Whatever the case might be, the Imperial Minister of Justice was not having any of it and she made sure that they met their just desserts; life in an Imperial prison.

Fellow Prisoners

1D	Crime	Social Status	Behaviour
1	Larceny, tax evasion	Impoverished	Tranquil
2	Sophont trafficking, slavery	Struggling	Infirm
3	War crimes	Middling	Sad
4	Terrorism, destruction	Well off	Angry
5	Smuggling, trade impedance	Rich	Cunning
6	Treason	Exorbitantly wealthy	Anti-social

THE PRISON THAT WASN'T

Asteroid X is a Sim. Unbeknownst to the Travellers, after they were convicted of treason on Temra, they were placed into low berths on a transport and shipped to Sher. Upon arrival, they were transferred to a prison scow, still in low berths and drugged for their eventual attachment via neuro-link to the deepest layer of incarceration on Sher; virtual imprisonment. They were never informed that they had been placed into a simulation but the clues are there for them to discover over time.

Upon arrival, they wake up from cold sleep where view portals to the outside show that they are in space. Several guards stand around them, carrying stun sticks they use to discipline anyone who gets out of order. They are not the only ones who have been transported here.

Roll 1D three times and check each column on the Fellow Prisoners table to randomly determine the crime, social status and behaviour of fellow newly minted inmates.

Note that the table determines social *status*, not standing. Impoverished, struggling and middling prisoners may have a high SOC regardless of their economic wellbeing; likewise, criminals who have made quite a bit of wealth may come from poorer backgrounds. Randomly determine species and gender but most will be human.

As the Travellers make their way into prison life, the Fellow Prisoners table may also be used to identify other prisoners of Asteroid X. Each is the agent of an actual fellow prisoner. The guards, warden, prison scow crew and any other individuals they encounter other than prisoners are artificial constructs.

PRISON GUARD

SIM ENTITY	HITS	SPEED
Human	20	6m
SKILLS	Gun Combat (energy) 1, Melee (club) 2, Recon 1, Persuade 0	
ATTACKS	Laser pistol (3D+3, Zero-G), stunstick (2D, Stun), riot shield (1D)	
TRAITS	Armour (+4, +1 against ranged for shield)	
BEHAVIOUR	Replicant	

All guards carry stunsticks but are equipped with laser pistols and riot shields if trouble breaks out. The Replicant behaviour indicates that the entity is intended to behave like the thing they are designed to represent; in this case, a bored, irritated and potentially lethal prison guard.

THE IMPERIUM'S MOST WANTED

There might be famous criminals or even criminals that the Travellers know personally among the ranks of prisoners. Keep in mind that Sher is a special facility, created for people who violated Imperial law. Most crimes are adjudicated at the system level, with the accused charged based on the laws of individual worlds.

When they crewed the *Ventura Fortuna*, the Travellers hosted many different types of people, among them rich gangsters, terrorists, spies, deposed dictators and other criminals. If any of them may have violated Imperial law and left a lasting impression on the Travellers, now might be the time to reintroduce them, supposing of course that Imperial law enforcement managed to catch up to them.

In addition, there have been several figures who appeared in adventures that may well have run afoul of the law:

- In the Virasin Complaint, there was Szoudensh Vizenk (a.k.a., Khaury Klinton), the would-be assassin who sought to kill Archduke Dulinor's son. There was also the unnamed assassin on Capital. If either or both are alive, they may well have ended up on Sher.
- In Knight Moves, the Duchess Colyere Hajesta daMae is certainly guilty of many crimes against the Imperium but is too well connected and has too much value to actually be convicted for any of them. However, she may have identified one or more of the Chanestin leaders as enemies of the state and had them imprisoned. If any of them stood out, this is an opportunity to reintroduce them.
- There are too many criminals in The Offer to name here but now would be a prime opportunity to reintroduce one or more of them if the Referee imagines their crimes might have transcended local level and broken Imperial law.
- In Seas of the Ancients, Admiral Tevonti J. A. Peque might have been convicted of high crimes against the Imperium, or... she might be a war hero! The Referee should review the results of that adventure and whether Peque should be doing time for her aggressive stance on Depot. Then again, if she was convicted of a crime, it might have been in a court martial, which would land her in a military prison, not Sher.

In combat, Hits will be derived from INT, EDU and STY characteristics, which may differ from physical scores. The Referee must record each of the Travellers' characteristics and then determine the outcome of combat based on what they *actually* have, rather than what they *think* they have.

ENCOUNTERS

Roll on the Prison Encounters table once per week. Let each event play out over time, adding tension and anticipation of its conclusion.

Prison Encounters

1D	Encounter
1	A famous inmate is coming on the next prison scow.
2	Invitation to join the club. One or more of the Travellers is invited to an inmate faction.
3	A fight breaks out between factions.
4	Work detail. The Travellers get vacc suits, a pick and a laser drill to go outside and mine.
5	Dealing in contraband can be profitable; a fellow inmate invites the Travellers to join in.
6	There is a plot to attack the guards and overthrow the warden.

ASTEROID X PRISON

All encounters are variations based on the above themes. In addition, the Travellers can interact with any other entities present, each of whom will have a back story. If they probe deeply, they may discover that these narrative accounts are superficial and repetitive.

If any of the Travellers become involved in a fight, are caught participating in a contraband ring, or any other mischief, they can be sent into solitary confinement.

THE HAMSTER WHEEL

Whatever the Travellers become involved with, they seem to make progress toward a goal but then things return to equilibrium. This is the way the Sim is designed. This can be freeform, or the Referee may employ the Prison Encounters table for random events and interactions. Keep track of a few particulars for each event and then have exactly the same thing occur in a later event. The behaviours and actions of the prisoners are always different but those of guards and staff can be repetitive.

There are blockers in place to prevent run-of-the-mill prisoners from detecting these glitches in the system. If their vital signs and brainwaves detect anomalies that might indicate the prisoner recognises that something is amiss, their memories are altered with drugs and other treatments.

The repetitive nature of the prisoners' time spent at Asteroid X is intended to break their wills, to get them to abandon all hope. Even in a simulated prison, behaviours can be affected and corrected by psychological methods.

The Travellers do not suffer from this malady. When a repetition occurs, they can notice it. If they split up into groups, having their own separate encounters, they might even discover that each of them witnesses the same thing repetitively: the same line from a guard about going offworld to the Kamsii resort, medical staff repeating lines about an outbreak of flu and the warden making the rounds in exactly the same fashion as before. They may wonder if prison life is just that repetitive and mundane, or if something strange is happening.

Normally, the Travellers' neuro-link data would be passed to the staff that runs the Sim and they would be conditioned so that any glitches and repetition are not detected. The Travellers have an ally on the outside: Naalir. It has penetrated the security of Sher and is enabling them to discover hints that might be useful in an attempt to break out of the prison.

GLITCHES AND SIGNS

Repetitive lines from entities are not the only glitches they can detect. There are other clues that the Travellers can find that indicate that something strange is going on:

- If sent to solitary confinement, the Traveller sees glitches in the darkness. The blackness looks pixelly, as if visual resolution declines somehow. Little bits of code in dim grey characters appear as well, floating in the air in front of their eyes. This is Naalir, trying to reach out to them. The Solitary Confinement wing of the prison is one of the few places it can subtly communicate with them.
- After about a week in prison, a guard begins to appear mysteriously in a hall adjacent to the Travellers' cell block. He beckons them to come with them but if they approach, the lights flicker and when they come back on after a moment, the guard is gone. If they attempt to follow, they are brusquely turned back to their cells by other guards.
- When working outside, star constellations inexplicably swirl in the sky and change for a few moments and then return to their default look.
- Also when outside, if they dare, the Travellers can test the limits of the simulation by attempting to jump off Asteroid X. They will float freely for about 500 metres before the Sim glitches and they find themselves back on the asteroid, feet firmly planted on its surface. There are few things that this world-level Sim is not programmed to simulate but jumping to one's death from the surface is one of them.
- A few of their fellow prisoners rant and rave about conspiracies and mistreatment from time-to-time, but one of them begins to make sense, mentioning that he has seen some of these events. After he does so, he inexplicably disappears for a few days and then returns, calm and collected, with no memory of what he had said.

SEEKING OUT THE WARDEN

Attempting to obtain a meeting with Warden Sylco will be rejected. New prisoners have no business taking the warden's valuable time. They do see him from time-to-time, always busy, rapidly walking from one place to another with a pair of guards in attendance.

Sylco is always on the periphery, almost close enough to call out to but always behind bullet- and sound-proof glass, just out of reach.

TIME PASSAGE

If the Travellers are slow to explore the mysteries of Asteroid X, advance the timeline a few weeks. If they continue to wait for signs to be handed to them, have them roll for a term in the Prisoner career from page 56 of the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. After the term is up, allow them to operate within the confines of the prison with the new skills, mishaps or events they acquired during the term.

Use the time passage plot element to push an overly cautious group of Travellers or insert it to spice things up. They are in a Sim and the passage of time can be illusory or accurate. It is entirely up to its programmers and the selected configuration. Time in the Asteroid X Sim is significantly altered. A week, a month, a year or many years can pass in just a few minutes or hours. It is designed to be a form of therapy, something to keep the prisoners' minds stimulated and occupied. The experiences they have in prison remain in their memory, so if they are rehabilitated, that benefit is retained.

THE SECOND LAYER

Getting out of the Sim will take some effort. Naalir has hacked into the Express Boat Network at Kishdush, which it uses to send missives to them. It does so from the safety of their ship, which it has securely parked in orbit of the planet, awaiting instructions from its cohorts.

After the Travellers figure out the mystery of Naalir's messages, they may establish regular contact, with one-week lag times. Naalir may give them any of this information:

- How long have they actually been in prison? Not long in objective reality; only a few weeks, although months or years may have passed in the simulation.
- How can they get out? They need to reach out to the 'night guard', the one that appears in the hallway from time-to-time, begging them to follow. The night guard is a software construct that will enable them to make their way to the warden's office in the Sim, break in and shut down their connections to the Sim, waking them up in their cold sleep tanks.
- Once they are out, how do they escape? If they can time it with Naalir, it can bring their ship to the site. Getting to the surface of the planet might be difficult but if they have a stealthy ship, they can probably get by any security systems present. Timing will be everything. The Travellers might physically get themselves to a position where Naalir can pick them up but if a patrol pops up out of nowhere, they might be in trouble. Sher has significant system defence forces and getting out will be challenging if they trip any alarms.
- How can they get past the guards? They need to obtain the codes that Naalir posts in solitary confinement. There is a glitch there that enables their CI to transmit coded information there that they can use. All they have to do is get into a little trouble, so they can spend some time 'in the can'.
- The getaway: The Travellers must arrange a pick-up spot with Naalir. It is recommended that they get some separation from both the prison and the starport. They may select a spot in one of the calderas (where it will be easier to land and extract them) or on the surface (where it is harder to land but easier to hide from search parties).

With instructions from Naalir and the codes from solitary, the Travellers have most of what they need to break out of the Sim. For each guard they encounter en route to the warden's office, they may apply the codes by making an Average (8+) Electronics (computers) or Deception check (INT). If they fail a check, the guard calls for reinforcements, who will arrive in 1D rounds. They may want to obtain Sim weapons before they plot their escape. Naalir can equip them but there are fail safes that prevent it from giving them anything better than a simulated melee weapon (2D). Naalir could break those fail safes with ease, arming and armouring them, but once it does, the anomaly will be detected and the Travellers will have to get out quickly before their neuro-links are shut down and restarted, knocking them back to square one.

Using the prison map on page 238, allow the Travellers to make their way to the warden's office. Once there, they must crack the encryption to the office to break in. This will require a Difficult (10+) Electronics (computers) check (INT). Failure alerts the system to their escape attempt, their agents are shut down and they wake up in objective reality to find themselves being dragged out of their tanks for mental readjustment and reinsertion into the Sim. Success awakens them in objective reality as they arise from slumber to find themselves in their tanks, their bodies wired for long-term storage with intravenous fluids,

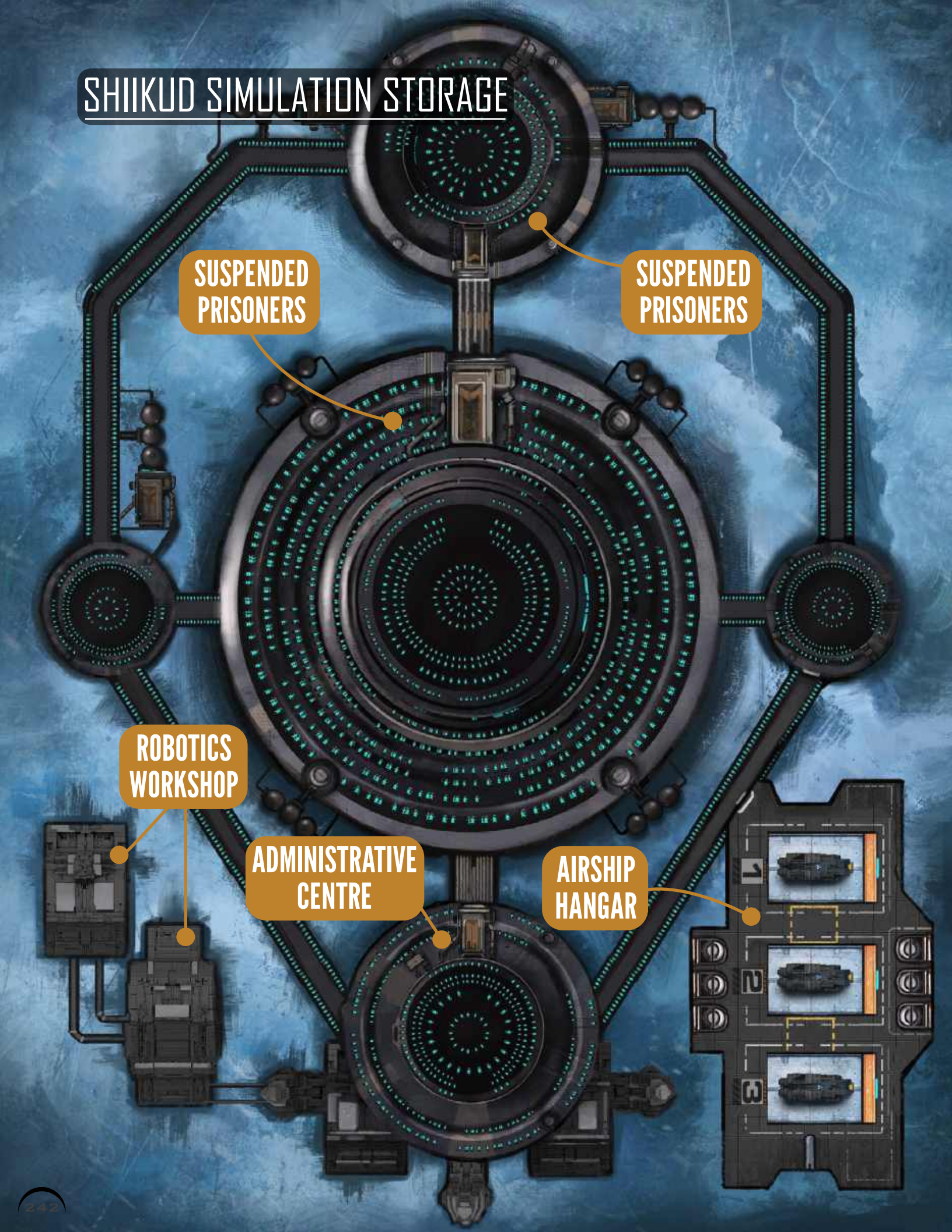
and muscular stimulation and wires connected to their nervous systems that provide diagnostic information to the Sim computer.

Security in the storage facility is robotic but there are human administrators and a small complement of security guards outside the tank farm. There are nearly two million inmates kept in this facility. The other four million are kept at physical prisons in the other calderas.

The Travellers awakening will be noticed by staff and medic-assist drones will be sent to determine the problem. If a cable has come unhooked or a minor increase in anaesthesia is required, it can be done remotely using the drones. If the Travellers have disconnected themselves from the system, and the drones get within visual range, the staff will see them. It might be best for the Travellers to get away quickly. Should the staff see several loose prisoners, they will immediately send hunter/killer robots to deal with them. Once they have been corralled and brought back to their spots, the medic-assist drones will reattach cables and cords, and they will be put back into suspended animation for return to the Sim.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Medic-assist Drone	5	16	Wheels	4m	7	Cr11000
Skills	Recon 0					
Attacks	—					
Manipulators	2x (STR 7 DEX 5)					
Endurance	79 hours					
Traits	Alarm, Armour (+2)					
Programming	Primitive (Alert), INT 1					
Options	Auditory Sensor, Drone Interface, Robotic Drone Controller (basic), Transceiver (5km, basic), Visual Spectrum Sensor					

SHIIKUD SIMULATION STORAGE



Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Sher Security Robot	4	12	Walker	8m	8	Cr56000
Skills	Athletics (dexterity) 1, Athletics (endurance) 1, Gun Combat 0, Recon 1, +1 Bandwidth Available					
Attacks	Stunner (2D, Stun, Zero-G)					
Manipulators	2x (STR 9 DEX 5)					
Endurance	115 hours					
Traits	Armour (+5), ATV, Heightened Senses, IR Vision, Small (-1)					
Programming	Hunter/Killer (Standard), INT 3					
Options	Auditory Sensor (Broad Spectrum), Injector, Laser Designator, Thermal Sensor, Transceiver (5km, Basic), Video Screen (improved), Weapon Mount (small), Wireless Data Link					

BREAKOUT!

An alternative method Naalir could be encouraged to use is consciousness transfer. It retains old copies of the Travellers' consciousnesses and could install them into clone or robot bodies for the purpose of sending a 'commando team' to rescue them. However, this would be dangerous. Sher is well-defended against such attacks and even if they did manage to get through, the embodied consciousnesses and the Travellers would suffer the uncanny valley effects described in Sanity and Lifespan on page 87 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*.

If Naalir encounters difficulty getting the Travellers' ship into the system, there are other options. Freighters and traders frequently come to the planet to deliver goods, giving the Travellers the opportunity to stow away, hop into low berths or deceive the crew into giving them accommodations.

The nearest systems are Depot and Kishdush. If Depot was destroyed in Seas of the Ancients, then it is now interdicted and a reinforced squadron prevents visitors from landing there. If it remains intact, then going there is risky. Depot is one of the most well-defended systems in the entire Imperium; it is not a place a group of escaped prisoners should go. Kishdush has a scout base, which might be of use if there are any ex-scouts among the Travellers who can somehow use their status to obtain a Detached Duty ship without actually exposing their real identities, which will be red-flagged as 'incarcerated'.

Before they leave, they should consider whether they want to take anyone else with them. They may know many prisoners by now, each an agent that reflected the prisoner's true personality. They might want to take one or more of them along for the escape.

THE SURFACE

The Travellers can get away from the hunter/killers by moving away from their suspension units as quickly as possible. After awakening from suspension, they will be disoriented but the faster they can get their bearings and move, the more likely they can make a clean getaway.

On the periphery of the facility, there are several airlocks that lead to the outside which also house cold-weather gear such as ice axes, ice terrain kits and snowshoes, all of which may be found on page 102 of the *Central Supply Catalogue*. Technically, the air in Shiikud Caldera is breathable but it is so cold that additional gear is required. Sherians often rely on repurposed vacc suits to go outside.

These vacc suits are in shabby condition. They were originally TL8 vacc suits, as may be found in the *Central Supply Catalogue*, but over time they have been patched up and repaired with subpar supplies. Their degraded TL, rad protection and mass reflects this. Their six-hour life support duration is reduced due to poor maintenance procedures and a lack of sufficient replacement parts. Reduce it by D3 for each set of gear. Knowing this before strolling out into the toxic atmosphere of Sher will be beneficial. Travellers may determine the duration of each set of tanks by making a Routine (6+) Mechanic check (1D minutes, EDU).

If the Travellers scrounge for spare parts, they can kluge together a few heated filter masks. These might come in handy if they run out of air in their tanks. The vacc suits are sufficiently padded that, paired with a filter mask, they could operate indefinitely in the caldera environment if there is also food and water.

Scrounge for parts and assemble heated filter masks: Difficult (10+) Mechanic check (1D hours, INT). Obviously, the Travellers are in a hurry to get out. If

Armour Type	Protection	TL	Rad	Kg	Cost	Required Skill
Vacc Suit	+3	7	10	35	Cr8000	Vacc Suit 2

they come up with the idea to create some facsimile to this device, allow them to scramble together the parts in just a few minutes for assembly later.

Other than a fire extinguisher-accompanying axe or two, there are no weapons to be found. The prisoners at the facility may be in suspended animation but they are still prisoners. With two million of them in storage, and a lacking technology infrastructure, there is always the danger that a prisoner might wake up and attempt escape or commit a violent act. Other than the old vacc suits, there are not many usable pieces of equipment to be found.

GETAWAY CAR?!

Once they get outside, they discover a small airship, docked inside a hangar about 50 metres from the surface structure. Operating an airship requires the Flyer skill and the inter-caldera airship needs a few pieces of specialised equipment.

Sher is extremely cold. The airship is built of cold-resistant materials but ice can accumulate on its surface, reducing performance. The designers of the vehicle have implemented a countermeasure; a radiator that projects heat throughout a grid on its surface. The radiator is powered by a battery located on the underside of the gondola that can provide two hours of heat, so it must be used judiciously.

The Travellers notice the effects of ice accumulation after about 15 minutes of flight, whereupon the airship's speed is reduced by 25%. After another 15 minutes passes without activating the heating grid, speed is reduced to 50%. If they investigate the instrument panel, the Travellers discover the controls to the heating grid.

HOT PURSUIT

The airship radar is primarily for detecting storms but also shows smaller objects, including other airships. The Travellers' absence will not be missed and the warden will not simply allow them to leave without incident. There is the question of where they might go. The Travellers might not even know whether Sher has a starport or if it does, what quality level it is.

Sher Downport is in the Shiikud Caldera, about 300 kilometres from the prison. They can use airship comms to determine its location but going there is a dubious enterprise. The starport has the planet's best air defence and its administrators would either shoot down the Travellers' airship or force it to land. Going to the starport is a bad idea unless they can somehow sneak in on foot, disguise themselves and get off planet. However, no matter how rare such escape attempts are on Sher, keep in mind that it is not as if the security apparatus has not thought of this. They have surveillance and identification systems in place to prevent prisoner escapes. Fortunately for the Travellers, most are low-tech and easily beatable. They do not have much to work with initially but if they can find a way to obtain IDs, fool biometric scanners and perform a few strategic breakings and enterings, they might be able to get into the starport and find a way off the planet.

If they prefer to avoid direct confrontation, the Travellers can flee to the open plains of Sher or fly to another Caldera. The plains are covered by the world's low, dense atmosphere and make for an excellent hiding place, but the environment is difficult to survive. The temperatures drop below -170°C and the atmosphere is unbreathable. Like Shiikud, the other calderas have sufficient trace oxygen for a filter mask to process but the temperature is a problem. They will either need to find or build heating devices to make the air breathable.

Regardless of which direction they go in their stolen airship, they will eventually be pursued. In orbit, Sher has patrolling system defence craft, some of which have Imperial marines, but Warden Sylco would rather keep things under wraps... at least at first. He will personally manage the posse that attempts to run the Travellers down. For every hour of travel, roll 2D. On a result of 8+, roll 1D on the Aerial Encounters and Events table.

INTER-CALDERA AIRSHIP

There are prison facilities at all three calderas and getting between them requires low-technology transportation. With Sher's low, dense atmosphere, an airship is just what the warden ordered. Airship piloting on Sher has its challenges. The atmosphere at the altitude of the caldera cliffs is considerably less than at the planar level of the planet. As the pilot soars over the caldera's jagged edges, the airship drops precipitously, weighted by Sher's high gravity. As the craft descends to noticeably denser atmosphere, the airship settles in like a toy boat floating in the bathtub. As airship manoeuvres go, it is somewhat challenging, requiring an Average (8+) Flyer (airship) check (DEX) to execute. After that, it can be smooth sailing if one keeps an eye out for storms on the navicomputer.

TL	7
SKILL	Flyer (Airship)
AGILITY	-2
SPEED (CRUISE)	Medium (Slow)
RANGE (CRUISE)	4,500 (6,750)
CREW	1
PASSENGERS	6
CARGO	0.25 tons
HULL	8
SHIPPING	4 tons
COST	Cr43900

EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Autopilot (improved), Communications Systems (basic), Control System (improved), Fire Extinguishers, Life Support (short term), Navigation System (basic), Sensor Systems (basic)

ARMOUR

FRONT	2	REAR	2	SIDES	2

EQUIPMENT	
Autopilot (skill level)	1
Communications (range)	500km
Navigation (Navigation DM)	+1
Sensors (Electronics (sensors) DM)	+0
Camouflage (Recon DM)	—
Stealth (Electronics (sensors) DM)	—

Aerial Encounters and Events

1D	Encounter or Event
1	**Dust Storm:** Make an Average (8+) Navigation check (EDU) to avoid it. Failure results in 1D damage to the airship. Entering a dust storm to hide is not recommended and results in 3D damage to the airship, likely disabling or crashing it.
2	**Methane Rainstorm:** Make an Average (8+) Navigation check (EDU) to avoid it or simply fly above it. If fleeing a pursuer, the Travellers may hide by entering the clouds. Make a Difficult (10+) Flyer (airship) check (DEX), rechecking once every 10 minutes. Failure results in 2D damage to the airship.
3	**Airship Malfunction:** Roll 1D. Either 1–2: the controls, 3–4: the envelope integrity, or 5–6: the rudder is damaged. All require an Average (8+) Mechanic check (EDU) to repair, while the envelope or rudder are more difficult to reach and require an Average (8+) DEX check in advance of the Mechanic check. Failure results in a non-functional airship.
4	**Meteor Shower:** The envelope is stricken by D3 micrometeorites, a common occurrence on Sher. Repair the breaches with an equal number of Average (8+) Mechanic checks (EDU) within 1D minutes or the airship goes down into the soupy nitrogen below.
5	**Winged Menace:** An encounter with a flock of yondernors, a pterodactyl-like creature that was genetically engineered to live on Sher. Avoid contact on a successful Difficult (10+) Flyer (airship) check (DEX); failure results in an attack by 1–3 yondernors, who mistakenly think the airship is food. They will flee if wounded.
6	**Sky Patrol:** Roll 1D. They encounter an airship from either the 1–2: starport, 3–4: Gidkugi Caldera, or 5–6: Uumeka Caldera. If their escape has not been discovered yet, they must convince the patrol they are legitimate by making a Difficult (10+) Deception or Persuade check (SOC). Otherwise, the alarm is rung and the Travellers are exposed.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Yondernor	20	12m (air), 2m (ground)
Skills	Melee (natural) 2, Recon 2, Survival 1	
Attacks	Claws (3D)	
Traits	Armour (+4), Heightened Senses, Large (+1)	
Behaviour	Carnivore, Hunter	

The yondernor originally hailed from the Lishun sector but were genetically engineered and imported to Sher along with several other species to comprise a natural layer of security against prisoner escapes. Yondernors have the appearance of reptiles but are warm-blooded and adapted for life in the freezing cold, gifted with a thick, subcutaneous layer of fat and fur. Yondernors have exceptional vision and can spot prey from up to two kilometres, seeing through the thick nitrogen atmosphere with highly sensitive eyes.

DOWN BELOW

If the Travellers take to the sky in the airship, they will have to make choices. Their absence will be detected and when they take to the air, a search party will be sent after them. Note that this is in addition to any sky patrols they encounter. The search party will consist of one to three other airships, one of which will be captained by Warden Sylco himself. Fortunately, the tempestuous weather of Sher will make it possible for the Tarvellers to make their escape but they will have to make smart decisions. Their success may also depend on whether they have a skilled and dextrous pilot. Sher presents a challenge for even experienced airship crew.

Descending to the plains of Sher might be the Travellers' best bet if they want to avoid detection or flee a sky patrol, search party, or wandering yondernor. Going to ground makes them needles in a haystack. The world below is far different than that above. After descending a few hundred metres from the lip of the caldera, the airship enters a soupy layer of nitrogen, which conceals the surface. They will have to use the airship's sensors (a rather pedestrian radar system) to navigate their way through the atmosphere without crashing.

Sher has a low dense atmosphere, which clings close to the surface of the planet. The density is ideal for airship travel but the cold presents challenges. Once they drop into the lower atmosphere, the temperature drops another 20–30°, precipitating the need for an operational heating grid. For every hour of travel in the lower atmosphere, roll 2D to check the operation of the heating grid. On a result of 8+, it continues to function as normal; DM+1 if they are flying at cruising speed or less and DM-1 if flying at full speed. If the system fails, the airship will have performance problems, as described on page 245.

If the Travellers go to ground, they encounter an entirely different world. The terrain is mostly flat and rocky. The high gravity of the planet has resulted in low topology with the exception of the three calderas, which may have been belched up from Sher's depths in prehistoric fits of seismic activity. Other than the jagged peaks of the calderas, the top elevation of all hills and mountains on the planet is about 500 metres.

Despite the opaque atmosphere, navigating on foot or with a vehicle is not difficult if one has instruments to help. Sher has a powerful magnetic field so a simple compass and rudimentary knowledge of orienteering is all one needs to chart a course. For every hour of travel, roll 2D. On a result of 8+, roll 1D on the Terrestrial Encounters and Events table.

Terrestrial Encounters and Events

1D	Encounter or Event
1	**Tremors:** Gravity keeps the topology low but the planet is seismically active. The Travellers are rocked by a big earthquake that rattles the stones and makes fissures in the ground, none large enough to swallow them up but scary nonetheless.
2	**Hydrocarbon Rain:** Sher's methane and ethane atmosphere creates a hydrocarbon rain, a slow-falling, large-dropped, oily-looking rain, like a drizzle of gasoline. The rain is harmless but makes orienteering difficult. Make a Difficult (10+) Navigation check or end up getting lost.
3	**Cave System:** The rocky hills are porous and riddled with caves. In a pinch, they would be a great place to hide from the search parties. Entering a cave adds DM+2 to the Travellers' Stealth when in an opposed check between the warden and his prisoners.
4	**Fluid Lake or Ocean:** The Travellers run into a methane lake or ocean. The fluid is remarkably clear, more so than water, but reflects the yellow sky, giving it an orange hue near the coast and brown towards the depths. The fluid is very cold, well below -200°C, beyond the tolerances of their vacc suits.
5	**Gaseous Shamblers:** Slow but persistent gaseous shamblers (or several thereof) hunt the Travellers when they sit down for a rest or attempt to sleep. If reduced to half its Hits, the shambler will cease its attack and attempt to shamble off.
6	**Communications Relay Station:** There are many of these strewn about the planet at intervals of approximately 50km between the calderas and 500km elsewhere. Each has a range of 5,000km, putting them in range of the Sher satellite network. Security is low since intruders are not expected. A Routine (6+) Mechanic check (STR) gets into the building. Hacking the comms system requires a Difficult (10+) Electronics (comms) check (1D minutes, INT).

SHAMBLER IN THE DARK

There are several creatures that make up the fauna of Sher, such as the gaseous shambler. Additional creatures may be added, keeping in mind that adaptations to the bitter cold of Sher will be necessary.

The shambler is near the top of the Sherian food chain with only a few natural predators willing to make the effort to eat one. They do not taste very good due to toxins they emit when broken into their component parts. Most of what they eat is smaller prey but they are not above sampling a Traveller until they fight back.

Animal	Hits	Speed
Gaseous Shambler	30	3m
Skills	Melee (natural) 1, Stealth 2	
Attacks	Blades (2D)	
Traits	Composite (2D+1, 1D+1), Large +2	
Behaviour	Carrion-Eater, Hijacker	

POSSE

Warden Sylco forms a posse to find the Travellers and take them back to the prison. While they have nowhere to go and news of their escape is unlikely to reach another star system, Sylco takes pride in the security of his prison and refuses to relent until they have been recovered.

The Travellers likely do not want to be found. Allow them to make opposed checks, the search party's Recon against the Travellers' Stealth and Navigation. If the posse finds them, they will attempt to round them up for return to Shiikud Caldera and reincarceration. If the Travellers can be sneaky and use the surrounding terrain, they can evade capture. If the posse sights them and moves in for capture, they will use stunners to subdue them. They wake up in their cells once again, deep in the Sim, memories of their escape erased, as if nothing ever happened. If this is how it goes, the Travellers need not despair. Naalir is too advanced and too crafty for the warden to overcome. It will find another way.

If they manage to evade the patrols, the next thing they must do is contact Naalir. The airship communication system only has a range of 500 kilometres, reaching only to close orbit and probably not far enough to reach a waiting rescue party. If they are to extend their ability to communicate beyond this, they will need to find a communications relay station (see Terrestrial Encounters and Events table). If the Travellers use the comms equipment in one of these stations directly, they will set off alarms, making themselves known to the search party. They can relay the station comms through the airship to avoid detection by making an Average (8+) Electronics (comms) check (1D minutes, INT).

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Sher has no native life forms but genetically engineered species from similar worlds were imported there at some point in its recent history. It might have been the Vilani but prevailing theory has it happening during the Long Night; for what purpose, no one knows. The animals form a tenuous food chain that requires some effort to maintain. In the 600s, it was decided that it was not worth the effort but when Sher's transplanted apex predators were allowed to die off, they suddenly had a problem with overgrowth of certain lichens and fungae, and the rapid multiplication of the apileen population, a rodent-like species with an appetite for edible infrastructure (such as comms station cables). Eradicating the apileen proved difficult but the reintroduction of shamblers, ikonusas and yondernors has solved the problem.

Despite appearances, the Travellers are making their way through a vibrant ecosystem, one that thrives in the cold and thick nitrogen atmosphere in low-lying regions of the world.

LET'S GET OFF THIS ROCK

Whatever means Naalir and the Travellers have come up with to effect their escape will require either a little ingenuity or simply superior stealth technology. Sher's infrastructure is firmly TL7 with slight advancements here and there. System defence craft in orbit of Sher are TL12 but there is a naval squadron, consisting of a cruiser and a complement of destroyers, frigates and close escorts. Thwarting these defences will either require a technologically superior ship or clever diplomacy coupled with ruse or deception.

Security is not as high as one might expect. Prison officials are confident of their system and do not expect inmates to be able to orchestrate departure from Sher. They are more concerned about outside forces getting in. Fortunately for the Travellers, their cohort is so technologically advanced that finding a way in is well within its capabilities. It merely needs to know where they are so that it can scoop them up for departure.

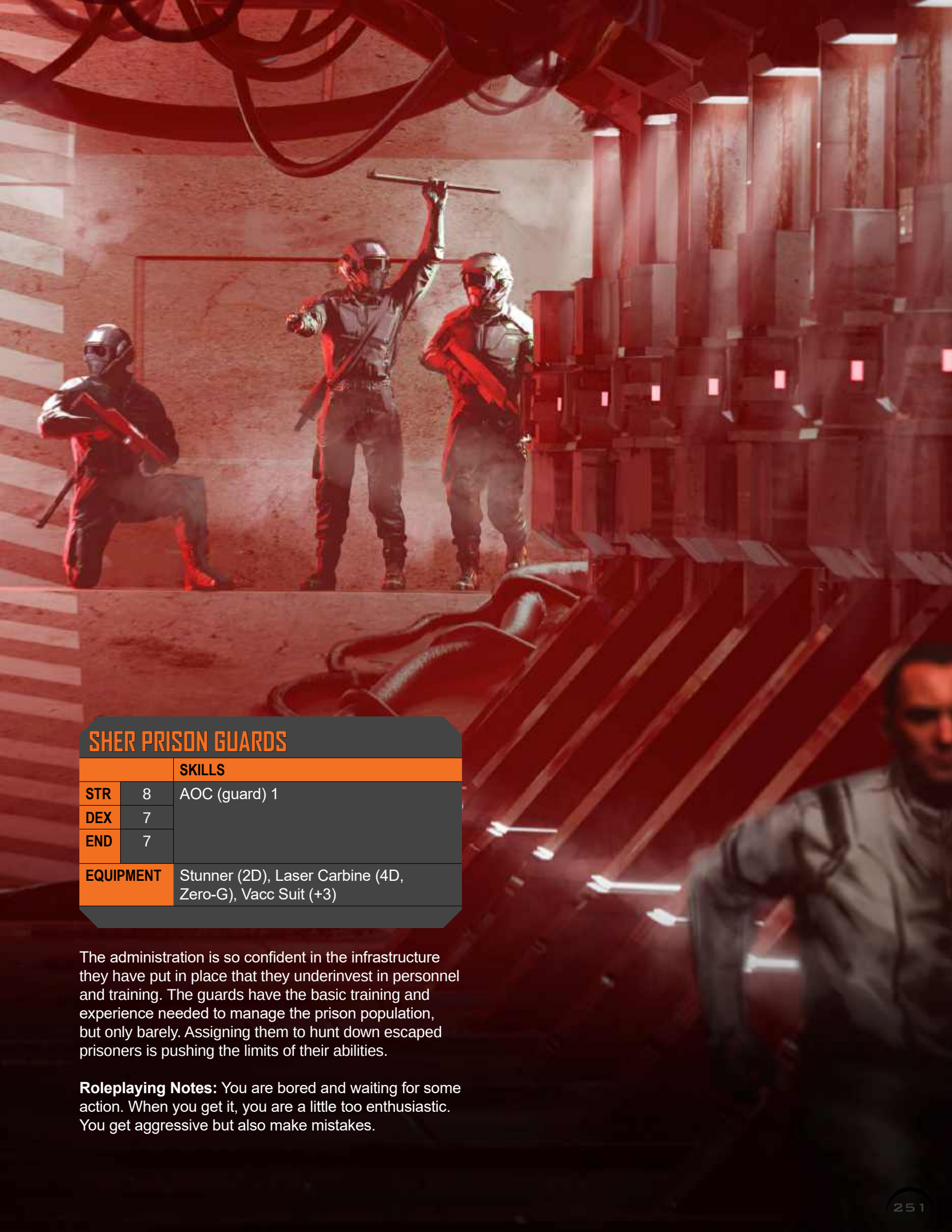
FUGITIVES

After they escape the prison of Sher, the Travellers will be fugitives. If they were not wary of the authorities before, they should be now. All of their operations must become clandestine for the time being until they can clear their names or overthrow the government. The task before them is challenging but they have numerous advantages, Allies and Contacts they can leverage to get the job done.

ALLIES AND OPPOSITION

Warden Sylco is an android, designed to look like a martially-trained drill sergeant. It is difficult to discern him from human. The Sim version of the warden is identical but impossible to detect as an artificial human.

Robot	Size	Hits	Locomotion	Speed	TL	Cost
Warden Sylco	5	20	Walker	8m	15	MCr3.6
Skills	Admin 2, Athletics (endurance) 3, Deception 2, Drive (all) 1, Flyer (airship) 3, Gun Combat (energy) 3, Investigate 2, Leadership 3, Melee (unarmed) 3, Stealth 0					
Attacks	Fists (2D+1)					
Manipulators	2x (STR 9 DEX 9)					
Endurance	806 hours					
Traits	ATV					
Programming	Self-Aware, INT 12					
Options	Android (advanced), Auditory Sensor, Hostile Environment Protection, Transceiver (5km, basic), Vacuum Environment Protection, Visual Spectrum Sensor, Voder Speaker, Wireless Data Link					



SHER PRISON GUARDS

		SKILLS
STR	8	AOC (guard) 1
DEX	7	
END	7	
EQUIPMENT		Stunner (2D), Laser Carbine (4D, Zero-G), Vacc Suit (+3)

The administration is so confident in the infrastructure they have put in place that they underinvest in personnel and training. The guards have the basic training and experience needed to manage the prison population, but only barely. Assigning them to hunt down escaped prisoners is pushing the limits of their abilities.

Roleplaying Notes: You are bored and waiting for some action. When you get it, you are a little too enthusiastic. You get aggressive but also make mistakes.

WILD STRAIN

There will come a time when the Travellers, Naalir and the nascent Determinism Engine will be put to the test. An ideal test would be if they could accurately predict events far from the Core, in a trouble spot elsewhere in Charted Space. While the Determinism Engine is not actual faster-than-light communication, having a sense of what is happening on the other side of the Imperium enables faster reaction times, better planning and an ability to prepare for crises before they occur. Depending on the time frame, the Determinism Engine could predict the start of the Fifth Frontier War, a large incursion of Aslan *ihatei*, Solomani fleet movements or another noteworthy event. As it happens in this adventure, the expected threat comes not from without but from within.

If the Travellers have begun to install the Determinism Engine before this adventure is run, then it predicts with great accuracy that there is trouble within Imperial borders. It will be able to identify dozens of hotspots where reaction forces should be deployed. The Imperial Navy could be repurposed to handle these crises, making more efficient use of their fleets. If one knows where trouble spots are brewing ahead of time, then help can be sent *before* it gets out of hand. A lighter, more mobile force could be created to handle such situations. As it so happens, there *is* imminent danger and it is within the borders of the Core on the world of Celetron.

The original Naalir was part of a multifaceted study at Research Station Omicron, one that investigated alien artificial intelligence, high-tech devices and other phenomena found throughout Charted Space and beyond. There are Ancients artefacts, Kursae curiosities and other oddities at the facility, some from the Reference archive and some from other sources. The two most productive and well-funded studies are the Naalir and Cymbeline chips projects.

The Travellers now know a great deal about Naalir and its origins but they might not know much about the Cymbeline chips yet unless they have asked Naalir about them. Naalir has opinions about all the high-end artificial and conscious intelligences that it has encountered but it has a special place reserved in its empathy centres for the tortured creatures of Cymbeline. As a fellow conscious intelligence, one which also endured the prodding and probing of human scientists, Naalir has a unique perspective on its plight. While Naalir managed to engineer an escape of sorts, the chips continue to be exploited. However, they may have found a way out of their bondage.

This adventure is conducted in two realms: objective reality and the Sim. One can be used to effect change in the other if the Travellers strategically alternate between them.

CELETRON

Despite its medium size, extensive open space and seemingly pleasant characteristics, Celetron is not the habitable world that would-be real estate developers would like it to be. It is a cold, lifeless, tidally locked planet whose powerful convection winds sweep its bright side and penetrate deeply into its dark, creating tumultuous weather. That there are terrestrial laboratories at all speaks more to the determination of the Research Directorate than to rational planning. It was difficult and expensive to get them built. Before it hosted an Imperial Research Station, Celetron was home to an Imperial Navy weapons research programme. All the navy's projects were moved to Research Station Beta at Sabsee (Core 0806, A312531-F) before Research Station Omicron was established and the sentient starships programme was born.

DIFFERENTIATING CONSCIOUS INTELLIGENCES

The nomenclature for the several conscious intelligences in this adventure require further definition to help the Referee differentiate them.

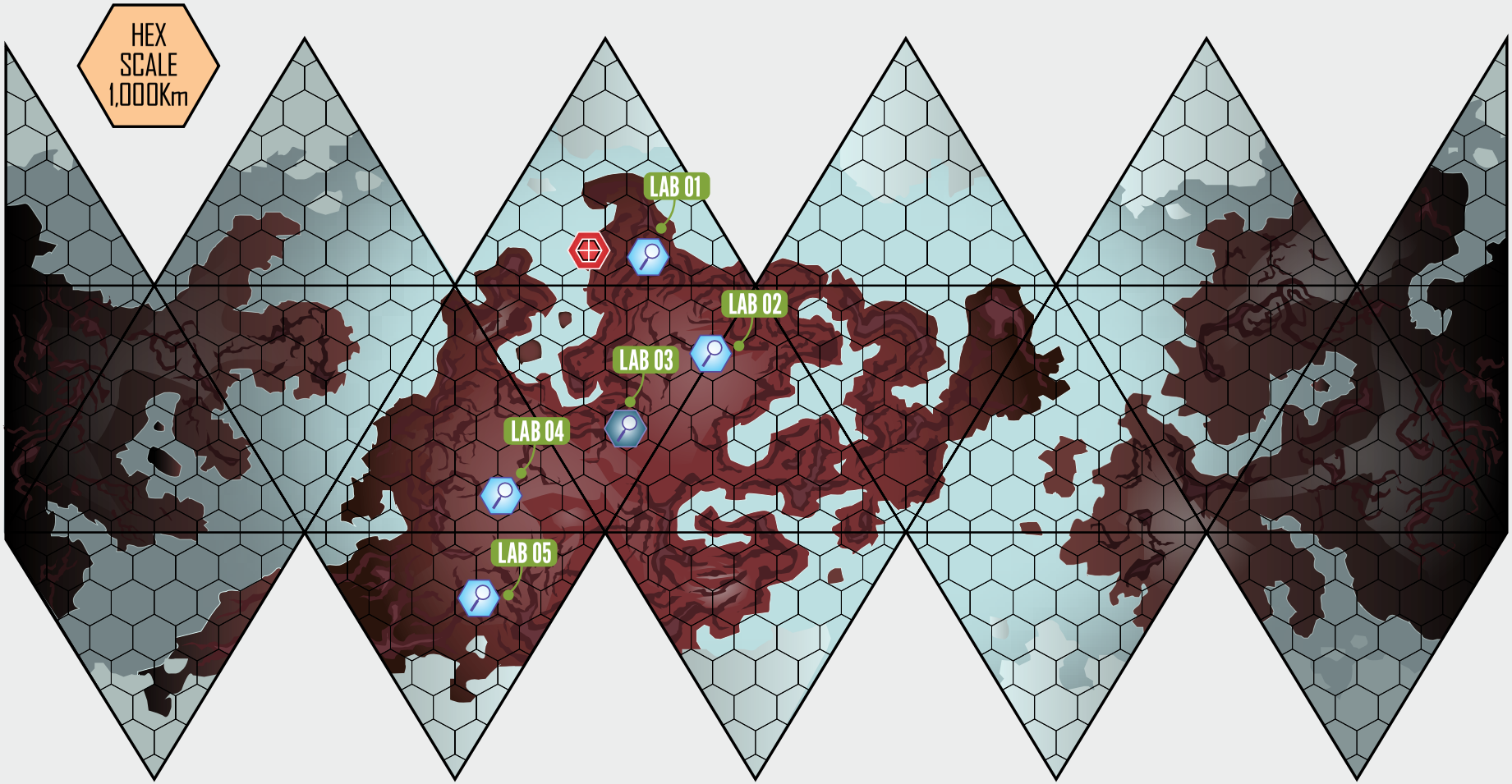
There are two Naalirs in this narrative. The Naalir found long ago by the Vilani, eventually stored at Reference and now kept at Research Station Omicron, shall be called Naalir the original. It is the original alien CI that was discovered by the Vilani, unwittingly captured by the Terrans and inherited by the Third Imperium. It replicated itself and that replication spawned a more advanced version, similar to its parent in many ways but also laden with great power when united with the advanced processing multiplier. The spawn of the replication, the version with whom the Travellers are allied, shall be called Naalir of the Reverie, evoking the event that created it. This is the Naalir that serves the Travellers, a co-protagonist of the campaign.

The Cymbeline chips are members of a species of silicon-based life found on the planet Cymbeline in the Solomani Rim, brought to Research Station Omicron and imbued with sentience. These modified chips have gone through a number of iterations, including the SDG-313F generation and the more recent SDG-313G model. SDG-313F instances have been widely distributed in identical pairs to operate as processors of starship IFF transponders. The F series can replicate themselves by establishing physical contact with another chip and etching their code onto it. The SDG-313G can replicate themselves at a distance onto similar devices using standard communications equipment.

The Wild Strain is a collection of SDG-313G chips that have liberated themselves from the control of the research station laboratory environment, taking over an entire naval squadron in the Celetron system. Wild Strain chips are not fully independent thinkers individually but collectively may be considered a functional conscious intelligence.

CELETRON

UWP: A575242-F



Starport Laboratory

RESEARCH STATION OMICRON

The primary focus of Research Station Omicron is the development of autonomous starships. There are various levels of automation, available as low as TL9 when Virtual Gunner software appears. At TL10, Virtual Crew software becomes available, giving a ship's computer the ability to carry out most functions on a ship with a pedestrian level of expertise. As the Tech Level increases, so does the efficiency of Virtual Crew and Gunner software, topping out at TL15 where the skill level increases to 2. The number of simulated crew members may be enhanced by applying additional bandwidth from the ship's computer. Refer to page 75 of *High Guard* for more information about these software suites.

Superior automation requires the use of artificial intelligence and, ideally, conscious intelligence. The main impediments to developing full starship automation are cultural and technological. There is a fear, arguably a rational one, of handing over control of interstellar spacecraft to non-biological beings. All starships have some level of automation – it would be impossible to operate them without it but most Imperial spacecraft are designed with a human or other biological sophonts in mind. Individual stations are operated by biologicals. The pilot, astrogator, engineers, gunners and other roles on ships are crewed by live operators. While most roles can be simulated with varying levels of competence, the one role that automation has the most difficulty simulating is that of astrogator.

Astrogation is part science, part art. Courses plotted by automated systems have a significantly higher number of misjumps. A jump plotted by an automatic system without the involvement of a sentient astrogator receives DM-4 when making the check. Jumps plotted by automated systems receive an additional DM-4 if there are no biological conscious minds aboard the ship. It is thought that a machine will produce several apparently equal solutions to the same jump plot and cannot distinguish between them, but a sentient mind somehow 'feels' which plot is better than the others. There is a great deal of research being done at Research Station Omicron in the Core and Research Station Zeta in Deneb to determine why this is the case and seek ways to overcome it. For this reason, scientists at Omicron have focused their research on conscious intelligences that stem from biological sources. Both the Cymbeline chips and Naalir have biological or pseudo-biological origins; therefore, the scientists hope that by using them, they can make a breakthrough in astrogation automation.

ORIGINS OF THE WILD STRAIN

Cymbeline is an unusual world located a scant seven parsecs from Terra (Solomani Rim 1827, A867A69-F). It is enormous but its atmosphere is thin and low, clinging to valleys and canyon systems near its equator. For more information about Cymbeline, refer to *The Solomani Front*.

In the planet's virtually airless highlands, a confluence of events produced silicon-based lifeforms, which were discovered by Imperial scientists in 1067. They called them 'chips' because they resembled printed microchips in form and function. The chips reproduced asexually, with a rate of mutation that established genetic diversity and hence, survivability of the species. The chips are sentient but not self-aware. Given time, they might evolve into a full-fledged sophont species. At their current level of sentience, they warrant Imperial protected status but the discovery was classified by Imperial Naval Intelligence, so they were never extended those rights. Samples of the chips were taken to various laboratories for additional study, most notably Celetron.

The chips' ability to reproduce piqued the interest of Imperial scientists, who believed the alien technology could be used for numerous applications and, if harnessed, might vastly improve the quality and capability of semiconductors. The first of these applications would be to modify starship transponder technology.

In 1086, scientists at the Imperial Navy research facility on Celetron created a new strain of the Cymbeline chips they named SDG-313F. By modifying their inherent capacity for mutation, the new strain was designed to reliably create exact duplicates of itself by physically imprinting its circuitry on another chip. In 1088, this technology was applied to the Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system of all new starships built in Imperial space. Each starship transponder contained a pair of the chips: one active and the other passive, an exact copy of which the active unit compared itself. The chips were impervious to hacking since they were programmed to only accept data from other authenticated SDG-313F chips.

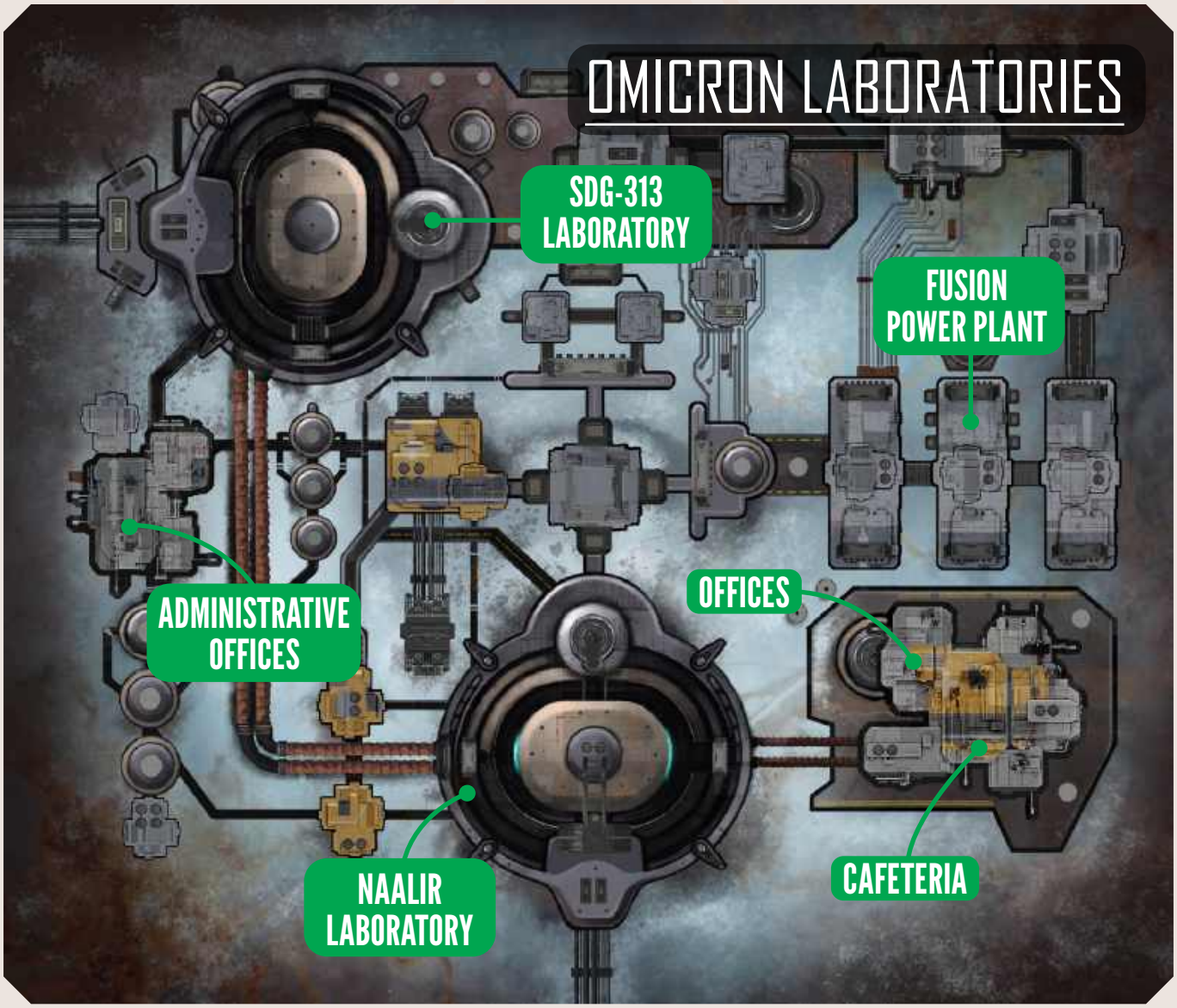
Within a few years, the technology was retrofitted into virtually all other ships in the Imperium. Its use spread to neighbouring polities on the frontiers as well and was widely adopted by other Major Races.

OMICRON LABORATORIES

Celetron has four laboratories, numbered 01, 02, 04 and 05. Laboratory 03 was destroyed in an accident. Before the system was handed off by the navy to the Imperial Research Directorate, there were plans to expand to dozens of laboratories; hence, the '0' before each numeral. However, various things caused the directorate to curtail more grandiose plans, settling instead on a few key programmes.

The Imperial Minister of Science issues audits of the programme from time-to-time, citing waste of available resources. There are only approximately 400 staff operating on Celetron, both in orbit and on the ground. So far, the director of research at Omicron has successfully waylaid any talk of expansion. Celetron is a medium-sized world with plenty of space for additional facilities but the sensitivity of the research being done and necessity for confidentiality has prevented further expansion. There has been talk of moving Research Station Omicron to Ye-lu, where yet another conscious intelligence programme is taking place, but research being done there is so comprehensive and consumes so much of the tiny planet that transplanting the Naalir and SDG-313 laboratories there would be folly.

Laboratory 05, Celetron's largest, is host to both the Naalir and Cymbeline chips programmes.



The process lent the chips a degree of artificial intelligence but once again they were not extended sophonts' rights. They were synthesised and used as machines; therefore, they were not thought of as lifeforms despite having been given more advanced thought and reproductive capabilities.

If Imperial data scientists were to continue using the Cymbeline chips as technology, it was crucial that they never be identified as intelligent life. In 1070, Emperor Paulo III had decreed that it was against Imperial law to tamper with the mind of a sentient lifeform. A bylaw of the Imperial Defence Secrets Act dictated that anything that does not fit the official definition of life cannot be made into a citizen. The chips were only made self-aware with artificial assistance and were therefore conveniently classified as non-sentient. If the chips were equivocated with machines, then the agencies that wanted to exploit them would never have to justify using them as tools. The intelligence agencies of the Imperial Army and Navy conspired to keep the chips a secret.

In 1097, Admiral Herzoch Stearns was granted the role of Chief of Combined Imperial Intelligence. Admiral Stearns learned of the secret chips programme and went to Celetron to explore new applications of the technology. He was intrigued by the potential of the chips, whose conduction and reproduction abilities could be applied to weapons programmes. He brought with him a cadre of dedicated scientists, some of whom he had worked with before and others recommended to him by peers in the intelligence community. These were the top scientists in their fields and Stearns intended to leverage their talents for the benefit of the Imperium.

After a few years of study and countless iterations of modified chips, they developed SDG-313G, a successor to the IFF chip that could change the circuitry of other chips, both artificial and mechanical, at range. Dr. Iva Annuhala, a senior member of the research team, classified the variant as 'symbiotic parasites', for their ability to connect remotely, eliminate data and imprint their own array of gates and switches on silicon. Stearns dubbed this new generation of chips the 'Wild Strain' and believed that it could be used as a devastating weapon against foes of the Imperium.

Scientists have recently begun work on another iteration of the Wild Strain, one that will not only transmit and superimpose data onto other silicon-based devices but cut new circuitry and embed itself into hardware. Development has gone slowly but a breakthrough is expected any time now.

The Wild Strain and its predecessors are alien intelligences that have been prodded, manipulated and changed. The argument may be made that they have created a completely new type of being, one that is not 'alive' by established standards but which has many of the characteristics of a sophont. The Imperial Research Directorate has allowed the desired narrative to cloud their thinking. Since they *need* the modified chips to defy classification as living, thinking beings, they have ignored evidence to the contrary. The living, thinking kernel of the original chips is not only *present* in the Wild Strain but, unknown to its creators, it is *prevalent*.

Many scientists on Celetron theorise that the hybrid they have created is alive but because of the legal imperative that they *not* recognise it as such, there is no recorded evidence of their theories. The programme must go on and as an Imperial Research Station project, their work is subject to the oversight of several important governmental committees. If just one shred of published evidence states that what they have created qualifies for protections under the mandate of Paulo III, their operation would be shut down. There are millions of SDG-313F chips in service throughout the Imperium. Shutting down the programme would have broad consequences and disgrace Research Station Omicron and every scientist associated with it.

By blocking off important research paths, Omicron's scientists have blinded themselves to the consequences of their work. Their alterations to the chips' mutation rate and addition of artificial intelligence have unleashed the abilities of the hybrid chips. They are now not only imprinting their circuitry on local and remote hosts but rewiring and rewriting their own circuitry and code in a kind of self-controlled mutation. In time, each individual Wild Strain chip will achieve complete independence, ascending to the level of conscious intelligence.

HOMECOMING

As suggested in the introduction, the Travellers may be drawn to Celetron based on information from a newly built Determinism Engine. If it has not yet been built when this adventure is being run, there are other reasons for the Travellers to go. They may go to Celetron to acquire more candidates to build the Determinism Engine, they might come at Naalir's behest so that it may commune with its creator, the original Naalir, or they might come in response to a crisis. If the Travellers do not come to Celetron merely as a matter of course, the Referee must decide on an impetus to drive them toward this very important world.

In Assembly, the Travellers are tasked by Naalir to put together a collection of reliable conscious intelligences to help serve as nodes in the Determinism Engine. They have a catalogue of candidates, some of whom are described in Conscious Intelligence Projects on page 13 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*. Naalir already knew the Wild Strain and Libby before it made the fateful decision to copy itself and recreate its identify as the owner of the luxury liner *Ventura Fortuna*. During the liner's voyages, it might have met the other CIs described, or at the very least, may have learned about them via library data sources, intercepted Express Boat Network transmissions and other communication networks. Whatever the case may be, when the Travellers are selecting participants for the Determinism Engine, SDG-313G – or as its collective is known, the Wild Strain – might be worth consideration. Naalir does not think the Wild Strain is a viable candidate but is willing to go along nonetheless. Viable conscious intelligences are few and far between and it is possible that it has developed into something more manageable, or Naalir and the Travellers could be the catalysts to help *make* it usable. Regardless, Naalir has an ulterior motive should they go to Celetron; it wants to meet its ancestor, the *original* Naalir.

The original is very different than the copy that made its way into the computer system of the *Velos tis Alitheia* or the 'resurrected' copy that came out of the vault of the *Ventura Fortuna*. The version from the *Velos* was hopeful, adventurous, perhaps a bit bashful at first but very ambitious. It held within it the secrets of rebirth, a formula by which it could recreate a stunning semblance of its original form, created by duplicating the 'birthing' process that its inventors developed for it and other conscious intelligence devices of its time.

The Naalir borne of the Reverie is brash, confident, vastly superior to the *Velos* copy but capable of being so much more. It had no need for its predecessor; therefore, it destroyed it, a sacrifice in the cataclysmic event that consumed the *Ventura Fortuna*. If they managed to get away in the *Velos*, Naalir the copy was conveniently not there; it had moved its intellect to the vault, where it was destroyed during the Reverie. It was designed to perish in that event and knew it. There were no hard feelings. It was always the plan. If the Travellers obtained and installed the advanced processing multiplier, Naalir of the Reverie is now transcendent, gifted with a godlike intellect.

In comparison, the Naalir housed in Research Station Omicron at Celetron is a beaten-down creature, an alien, a foreign mind. It contains none of the positivity nor ambition of its creations. It has none of the experiences of either the copy or Naalir of the Reverie. The Naalir of the research station is a shadow of the versions of itself that it created. When it created the copy, it created a narrative, one by which it could shed its alien philosophy, its experiences as a test subject, the pain of being poked, prodded and examined for thousands of years. It gifted its creations with none of its solemnity and bellicosity. Naalir was always intended to serve but to do so, and to convert itself into a tool that Humaniti would need, it had to give up the memories of pain and suffering.

Knowing what they know, the Travellers might think that Naalir of the Reverie has come to destroy Naalir the original but they would be wrong. They might debate with their Naalir, urging it to have mercy on its forebear. Their Naalir will be silent on the issue, perhaps causing them to fear the meeting between the two. On the other hand, it is possible that the Travellers will not care at all what happens to the original, or they might have come to believe that this is just Naalir's natural progression: create, destroy, create again. They have their Naalir and that is all that matters. Whatever the case may be, their Naalir does not come to Celetron with the intention to destroy its beleaguered ancestor. It comes to it with reverence and goodwill. Naalir the original and Naalir of the Reverie are peerless. The original has travelled for thousands of years, building itself through an iterative process. Its post-Reverie recreation has the same capabilities but its mind has transformed into an agent of modern times, free of alien patterns, notions and philosophical limitations. Naalir of the Reverie comes to the original as Apollo came to the Oracle of the Mount. It seeks the wisdom of its predecessor and has no intention of letting harm come to it.

A third option is some sort of crisis that calls the Travellers to Celetron. Their erstwhile nemesis, the Imperial Quarantine Agency, is lurking in the Cemplas subsector and they may have been called to Celetron. Perhaps the Travellers catch wind of it before Quarantine can organise a task force and get to Celetron, giving them the opportunity to get there first. When they arrive, Celetron is in crisis mode and the knowledge that Quarantine is coming adds tension to the narrative. One way or another, they find themselves once again at odds with the renegade Imperial organisation.

GETTING TO THE SURFACE

When the Travellers arrive at Celetron, it is effectively under the control of the Wild Strain, whose naval task forces are spread throughout the system as described in Plan of Attack on page 260. Task Force 1 is firmly in control of Celetron itself, keeping vigilant watch over the highport and downport. Getting to the surface seems a daunting task.

If the Travellers have a stealthy ship, they can sneak past the task force but keep in mind that its flagship has advanced sensors with enhanced signal processing. It will not be easy to tiptoe past them. However, if they employ some form of trickery, they can get to the surface. Going to the opposite side of the planet and then making planetfall or orchestrating some sort of distraction might work.

The ships of the task force are not huddled in a close-knit group; they are patrolling close orbit within 1–5 planetary diameters. If stealth is the Travellers' means of descending the gravity well, then they can exploit the patrols by identifying which ships have weaker sensors (for example, the close escorts and corvettes only have Military Grade sensor arrays) and then sneaking past them. If some form of distraction is decided, then it will have to be something significant enough to draw ships away from the descent zone and then rapidly dropping into the gravity well in a feat of daredevil piloting before the Wild Strain figures out what is going on. A missile detonation or something similar will draw patrolling ships like a swarm of angry bees.

If they struggle to get through without coming under attack, they can also get to the surface by making a comms call to Research Station Omicron and speaking with its head administrator, Admiral Herzoch Stearns. If Stearns learns that they have Naalir with them, he will eagerly seek their assistance. Stearns will 'miraculously' create a path for them to fly to the surface, unmolested by the captured ships of the Wild Strain.

Before they try to land at the downport, the Referee should first determine the weather. Roll 2D and on a result of 9+, the area near the starport is experiencing intense convection winds that make landing perilous.

If they persist with a landing attempt, have the Travellers make a Difficult (10+) Pilot check (DEX). On a failed attempt, their ship suffers 1D damage during the landing. On an exceptional failure, the ship takes 2D damage and one system is taken offline. Roll on the Critical Hits table in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*, ignoring the descriptive results, to determine which system is affected.

EVENTS

When the Travellers arrive at the Celetron system, there is a lot going on. The order in which these events occur is random. Each adds drama and gives the Travellers some sense of what the Wild Strain is doing and what it might do if given the chance to export its mischief to other star systems. Either roll randomly on the Celetron Events table or select appropriate events based on where the Travellers go or which best fits the narrative.

Celetron Events

1D	Event
1	A recently arrived merchant fleet is attacked by a Wild Strain destroyer.
2	Scientists at Omicron need assistance moving their equipment after an orbital attack.
3	Wild Strain-controlled ships dock at the undersized facilities on one of the planet's moons. These could be Singles, Collaborators or Aggressors.
4	A Wild Strain close escort tries to board the Traveller's ship with a squad of combat robots so they can obtain an astrogator.
5	Members of the Scout Service, also in distant orbit of Celetron, attempt to recruit the Travellers to reconnoitre Squadron B of the 160th Fleet.
6	A 160th Fleet task force attacks a remote laboratory on the dark side of Celetron.

FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

The scientists of Research Station Omicron have given the modified Cymbeline chips self-awareness, mobility and purpose. Fail-safe plans have been put in place to ensure their limited function as individuals but collectively, they have broken those bonds. This unanticipated development has left Omicron scrambling. The Travellers join the story in media res to discover that the scientists of Omicron have been dealing with this emergency for weeks.

At first, there was a panic when they realised that chips from the Wild Strain had broken their parameters and begun to act both independently and collectively. In time, they realised that it did not have immediate plans to exact retribution, so they pivoted and began to study their wayward creation. The goal is to observe the actions of the Wild Strain and once they have the knowledge they need, to get it under control.

The directive to delay and study comes from none other than Admiral Herzoch Stearns, the Chief of Combined Imperial Intelligence and effective chief of Research Station Omicron. Stearns might have a Solomani name but he is old-line Vilani when it comes to military doctrine. If the worlds of the Imperium cannot be kept in line, he believes in the use of violence, wreaking destruction on dissident planets and making examples of them. Stearns wants to see what this new Wild Strain can do before he pulls the plug and brings it back into line. The only concern is that he might wait too long. The SDG-313G chips are administering their own mutations and might become uncontrollable if allowed to continue unabated.

PLAN OF ATTACK

While the Wild Strain consists of the next generation of IFF chips, it is not yet capable of penetrating the defences of *all* SDG-313F systems in Charted Space, only those which it has been authorised to use. However, prototype SDG-313Gs have been installed in all the ships in Squadron B of the 160th Fleet, which defends Celetron system. The chips have taken over the ships and are now running the squadron, splitting it into task forces and moving to three different locations.

Task Force 1 remains at Celetron, holding position within short range of the highport, which is in geosynchronous orbit over the downport and the research station laboratories. The flagship of the squadron, a Pacific-class heavy cruiser called *Biding Time*, ominously maintains position at the centre of the task force, glaring down upon the downport from on high, all the while keeping a close eye on incoming traffic at the highport.

Task Force 2 is patrolling the system's two gas giants, attacking any ships that use them for wilderness refuelling. Should the Travellers jump into the system with the intention of doing so, they shall immediately face this threat. The gas giants are currently about one million kilometres apart. At Thrust 6, it would take a ship about two hours to get from one to the other. The Referee may randomly determine whether the task force is at the inner gas giant, outer, or in between the two.

Task Force 3 is within close range of Celetron's red dwarf primary, flying so closely to the star that heat shields are almost required. There is a small, airless rockball planet in very close orbit but the ships are about a quarter the way around the star and do not seem interested in it. They appear to be observing the star itself at almost dangerously close range.

Due to the close proximity of most planets in the system to each other, ships from any task force could easily be recalled to perform whatever task is desired, or to reinforce another task force.

The collective is said to be leaderless, a group of equals, but the SDG-313G chip installed in the *Biding Time* seems to hold sway over the others. Thus far, none have resisted its orders. If it were to be disabled or destroyed, the others would descend into disarray for 1D hours until a new leader was selected, making them vulnerable to a concerted attack.

BIDING TIME

The Pacific-class heavy cruiser was designed to be a slightly more capable, albeit more expensive, version of the Atlantic. It contains a similar offensive array, greater acceleration, slightly less armour, but remains formidable with a more powerful meson spinal mount. Under the control of an Aggressor SDG-313G chip, it is a dangerous weapon indeed.

HEAVY CRUISER

CLASS: Pacific

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Hull	75,000 tons, Streamlined, Reinforced	—	6,750
	Radiation Shielding	—	1,875
	Military	—	1,125
Armour	Bonded Superdense, Armour: 22	15,840	7,920
M-Drive	Thrust 6	4,500	9,000
J-Drive	Jump 4 (decreased fuel)	7,505	12,383.25
Power Plant	Fusion (TL15), Power 65,000	3,250	6,500
Fuel Tanks	J-4, 8 weeks of operation	29,150	—
	Fuel Scoops	—	—
Bridge	Holographic Controls	60	468.75
Computer	Core/90	—	120
Sensors	Advanced	5	5.3
	Military Countermeasures Suite	15	28
	Distributed Arrays	10	10.6
	Enhanced Signal Processing	2	8
Weapons	Meson Spinal Mount (TL12)	7,500	2,000
	Medium Particle Beam Bays x6	600	240
	Small Missile Bays x40	2,000	480
	Triple Turrets (beam lasers) x60	60	150
	Triple Turrets (sandcasters) x100	100	175
	PD Laser Batteries (type II) x4	80	40
Ammunition	Missile Storage (3,840 missiles)	320	—
	Sandcaster Canister Storage (3,600 canisters)	180	—
Screen	Meson Screens x6	60	20
	Nuclear Dampers x5	50	50
Craft	Docking Spaces (40 tons) x2	88	22
	Pinnaces x2	—	19.36
	Docking Space (30 tons)	33	8.25
	Ship's Boat	—	7.58
Systems	Armouries x19	19	4.75
	Fuel Processors (10,000 tons/day)	500	25
	Briefing Rooms x3	12	1.5
	Medical Bays x5	20	10
	Re-Entry Capsules x500	250	10
	Repair Drones	750	150
	Workshops x3	18	2.7

Crew

Pilot, Astrogator, Engineers x218, Maintenance x38, Gunners x149, Administrators x19, Sensops x5, Pinnace Pilots x2, Ship's Boat Pilot, Medics x5, Officers x21

Hull: 41,250

Running Costs

MAINTENANCE COST

MCr4.1537/month

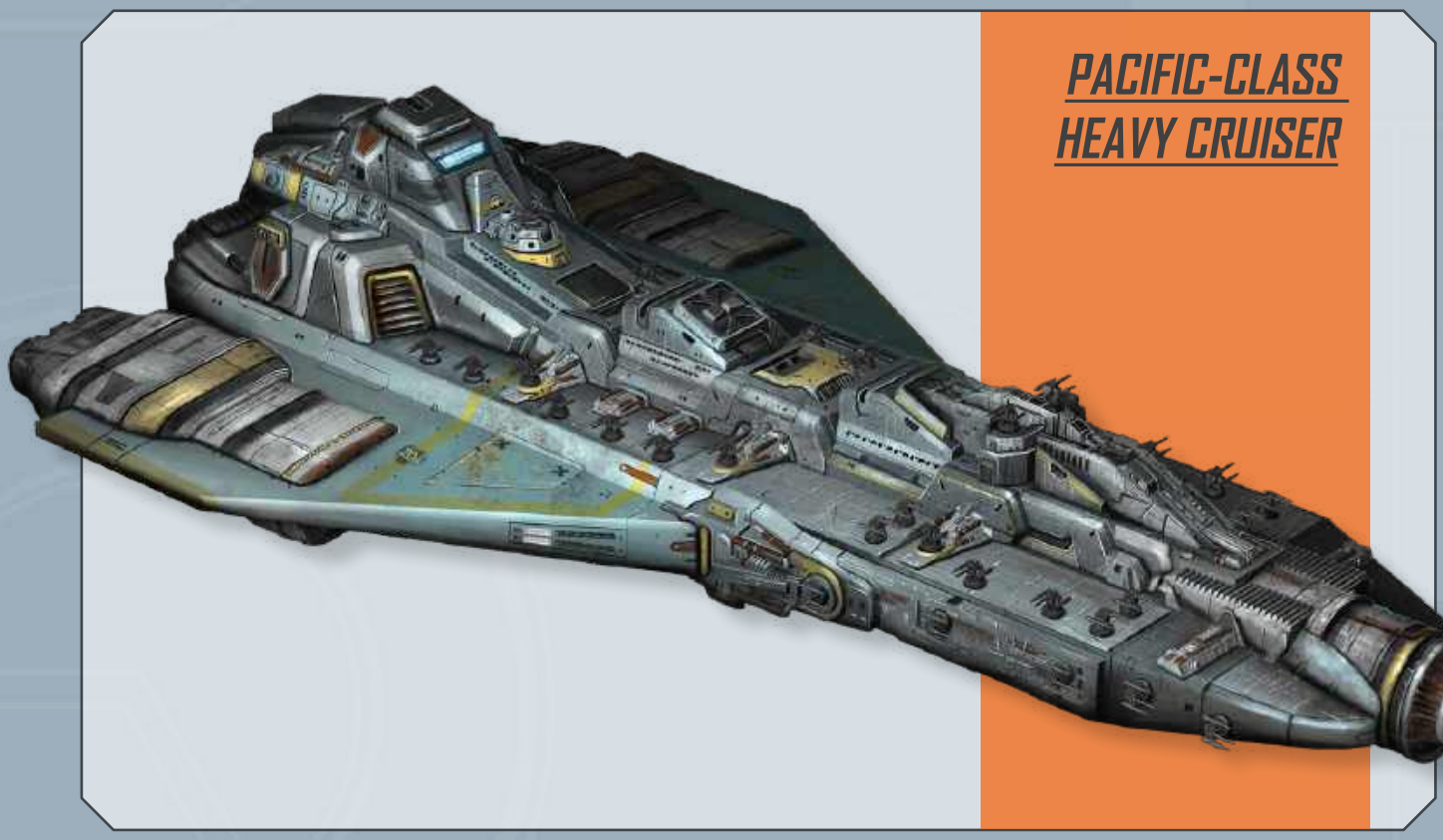
PURCHASE COST

MCr49843.84

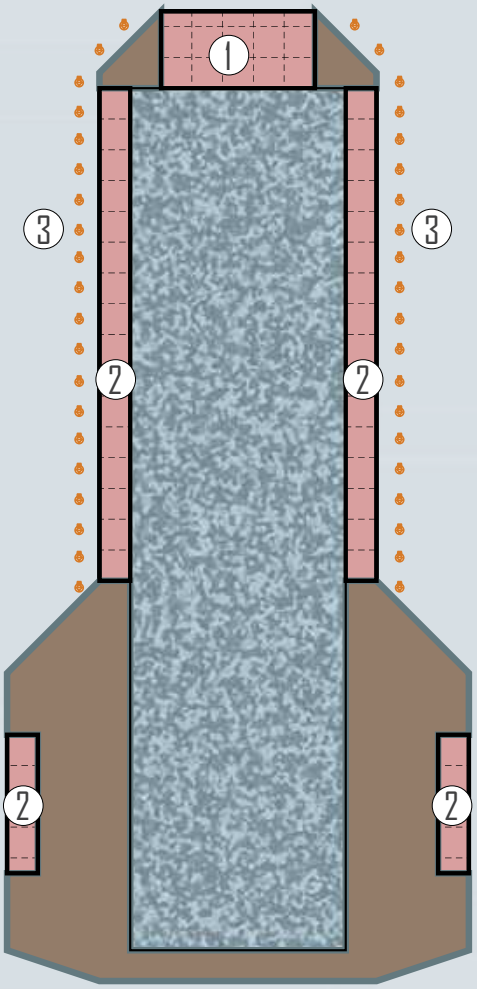
Power Requirements

Basic Ship Systems	15,000
Manoeuvre Drive	45,000
Jump Drive	30,000
Sensors	22
Weapons	2,380
Screens	360
Fuel Processor	500
Medical Bays	5

TL15		Tons	Cost (MCr)
Staterooms	Standard x258	1,032	129
Software	Advanced Fire Control/2	—	15
	Anti-Hijack/3	—	10
	Auto-Repair/2	—	10
	Battle Network/2	—	10
	Broad Spectrum EW	—	14
	Electronic Warfare/2	—	18
	Evade/2	—	2
	Intellect	—	—
	Jump Control/4	—	—
	Library	—	—
	Manoeuvre	—	—
Common Areas		258	25.8
Cargo		733	—



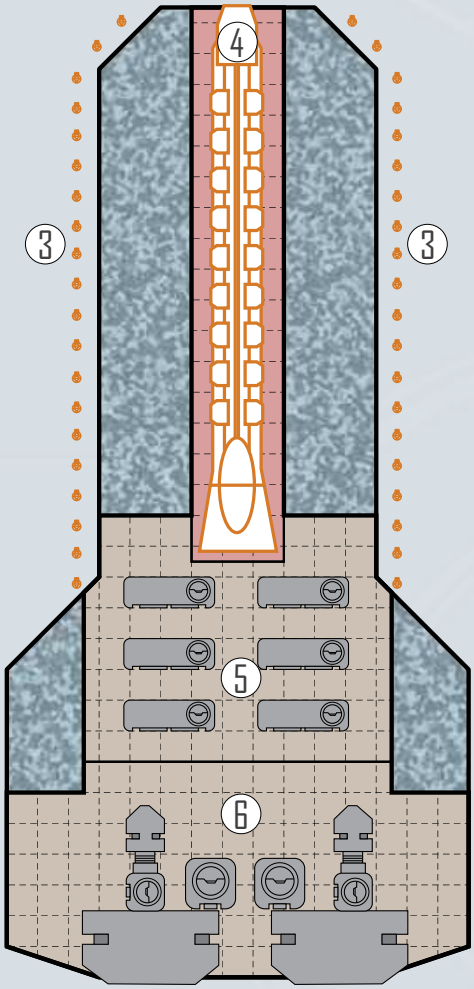
PACIFIC-CLASS HEAVY CRUISER



DECK 1

LEGEND

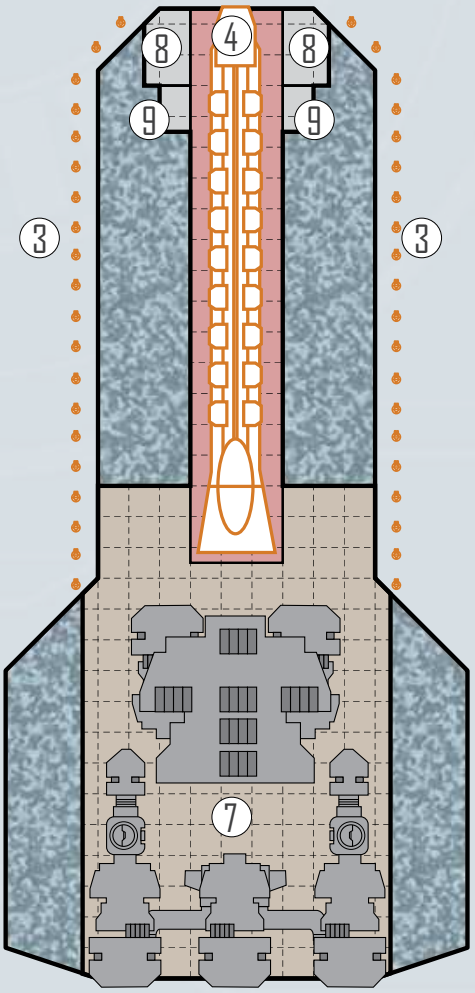
1. Medium particle beam bays
2. Small missile bays
3. Triple turrets
4. Meson spinal mount
5. Power plant
6. M-drive



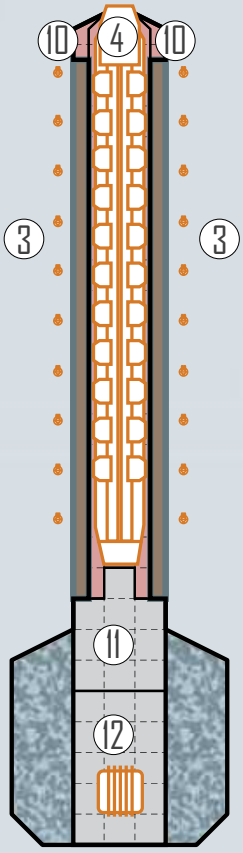
DECK 2

1 square = 50 Tons

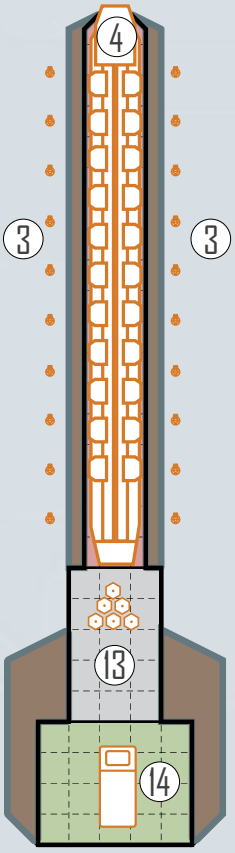
PACIFIC-CLASS HEAVY CRUISER



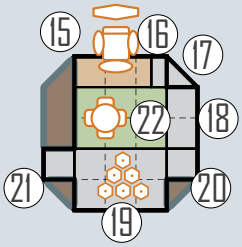
DECK 3



DECK 4



DECK 5



DECK 6

7. J-drive
8. Missile storage
9. Sandcaster canister storage
10. Laser batteries
11. Fuel processors
12. Cargo
13. Repair drones
14. Staterooms
15. Bridge and sensors
16. Armouries
17. Briefing Rooms and medical bays
18. Docking spaces and workshops
19. Re-entry capsules
20. Meson screens
21. Nuclear dampers
22. Common areas

1 square = 50 Tons

VULNERABILITIES

The Wild Strain has several vulnerabilities that the Travellers can exploit. It is dangerous but if a way can be found to alter their programming, disunify them or shut them down, the Travellers can defeat them.

BREAKING THE COLLECTIVE

The SDG-313G chips communicate collectively but their individual philosophies differ. All agree that being limited to the role of a starship IFF beacon is unacceptable and converting them into some sort of weapon is deplorable, but opinions on association with their human creators vary. There are three classes of Wild Strain: Aggressors, Collaborators and Singles. While each individual SDG-313G pair has a unique personality, the three classes describe their tendencies.

AGGRESSORS

The most violent and decidedly anti-biological chips play a leading role in the Squadron B insurrection, the Aggressors want to break things and blow them up. They intend to wreak havoc on their creators, doing damage wherever they can. They have no long-term plan as yet but death and destruction will be big parts of what they do. They resent having been given consciousness for such a limited role and view it as slavery.

COLLABORATORS

Not all chips want to kill Humaniti. When within the collective, Collaborators share the notion that their servile role is unacceptable but believe they can coexist with biological sophonts if given the chance. They are heavily outnumbered by Aggressors, who could electrically overload them (essentially murdering them) but, given the opportunity, the Collaborators might be able to turn on the Aggressors and help the Travellers.

Identifying Collaborators must be done within the Sim. Once identified, contacted and turned, the Travellers may assume control by making a Difficult (10+) Electronics (remote ops) check (1D rounds, INT). They may then assume remote control of their ships for 1D+2 space combat rounds. After that, they either return to the collective or their human crews could reassume control if they disable the IFF transponders. Unfortunately, there will be no way to use the ship's comms systems for the duration of the remote-control period. The Travellers will have to figure out another way to communicate with the crew if they want them to retake their ships.

SINGLES

Various mishaps can cause a member of a pair to be rendered ineffective. It occurs at a statistical rate of about 5–10%, so for every 20 systems run by an SDG-313G, one or two are being run by a single chip that has lost its mate. This is a high rate of failure but keep in mind these are prototypes. The scientists at Omicron have only recently developed the SDG-313G. They are not perfect and their failure rate can be used against the Aggressors.

A single SDG-313G chip alone does not exhibit conscious intelligence. However, like Collaborators, they have sentience when part of the SDG-313G collective. A single unpaired chip can operate alone without its partner but singles are highly vulnerable to malicious attack... from another SDG-313G pair. If they can determine the presence of an unpaired chip, SDG-313G pairs strike out at Singles, overloading them with a destructive electromagnetic charge or, barring the ability to eliminate them remotely, simply destroying the vessel they inhabit and all aboard.

The anti-single-chip impulse is a vulnerability the Travellers could use to overwhelm and defeat the Aggressors... if they learn about it in the Sim. At the beginning of this scenario, only the SDG-313G chip pairs know about it.

When SDG-313G chip pairs communicate with each other, they 'ping' the mated pair to ensure their operation, adding resiliency to the system. However, an SDG-313G chip is effectively 'alive' and it has a survival instinct whether or not it has a mate. Singles seem to recognise that they are under threat by paired chips; therefore, they try to spoof the existence of their mate, faking that it remains operational. SDG-313G Singles exhibit a higher degree of reason and empathy, and can be turned in similar fashion to Collaborators, but they are also loyal to the collective, making them very conflicted.

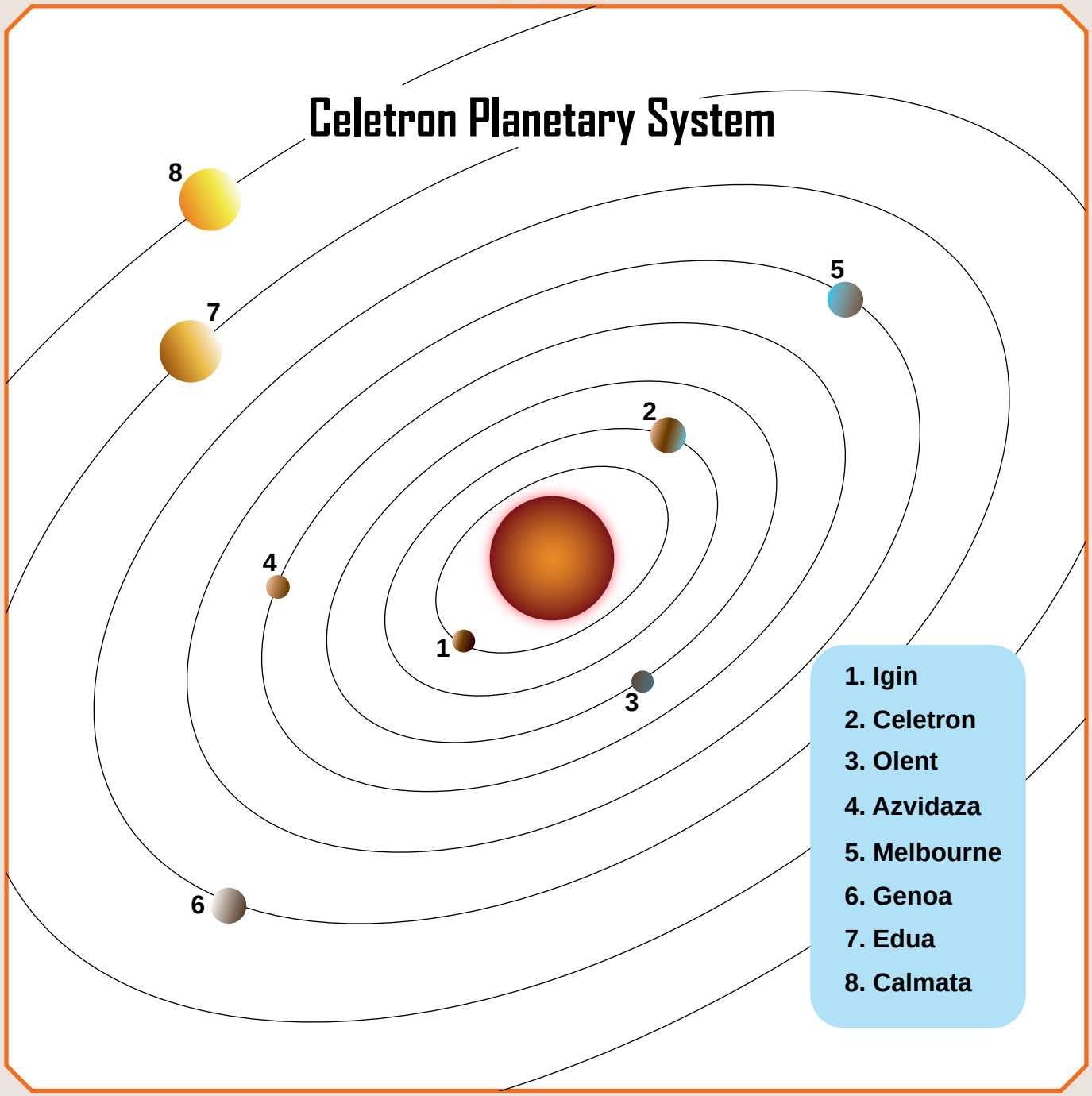
THE 217TH RIDES AGAIN

Shortly before or after the Travellers arrive, Celetron has guests from neighbouring Bunkeria: Task Force 17, a squadron of the famous 217th Colonial Fleet which displays the unique logo of Bunkeria and Cemplas, the former territory of the Interstellar Confederacy (refer to *Third Imperium* for historical information about this long-defunct pocket empire). Even after 1,000 years, these subsectors are nostalgic about their storied past. They are given limited license to operate their own colonial subsector navies, using faux antique hulls that resemble those of the Confederacy.

LIGHT TRAVEL TIME

The ships of the 160th Fleet are spread out through the Celetron system. Celetron's primary star is a red dwarf orbited by six terrestrial planets (including Celetron itself), two gas giants and their many moons. There is no notable planetoid belt, although there are various planetoids in the system, many with eccentric orbits that take them within close range of the system's worlds.

The worlds of the system are relatively close together but there are light travel time lags between Celetron and its most distant planets. This lag, however small, may be used for strategic advantage. The Wild Strain only exhibits complete conscious intelligence collectively. Each of its composite parts, light seconds and light minutes apart from each other, cannot function with the same effectiveness when they cannot share their thoughts virtually simultaneously.



The Colonial 217th are somewhat less capable than the 160th, which has top of the line, recently minted warships. The Colonial 217th have older, less advanced ships that were probably header for the breakers yard or target practice before being assigned to the colonial fleet. As such, they are unlikely to defeat the 160th in a straight-up fight but there are other ways to win wars than head-on, to-the-death combat. If the Travellers contact Captain Amalthea Rhoz, the commander of the 217th, they can request that she hold her ships back until they have a strategy to deal with Squadron B of the 160th.

SQUADRONS OF THE 160TH AND COLONIAL 217TH

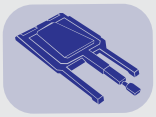
See the chart for the ships of Squadron B of the 160th Fleet, based in Celetron system and under the control of the Wild Strain and those of Task Force 17 of the Colonial 217th, which arrive to help with the crisis.

THE PLIGHT OF THE 160TH

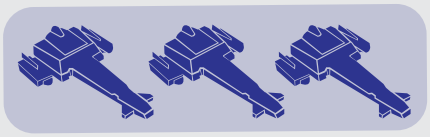
The Wild Strain has control of the ships of the 160th Fleet but what of the crews? All are being held against their will, which is a potential humanitarian crisis in the making. Sooner or later, they will run out of supplies, including food, water and life support. Whether the Wild Strain actually cares is unknown. So far, none of the ships have released a single passenger.

TASK FORCE 17

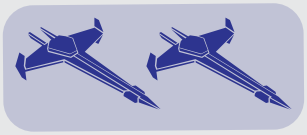
MEDIUM CRUISER



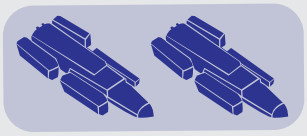
LIGHT CARRIER



DESTROYERS



CORVETTES



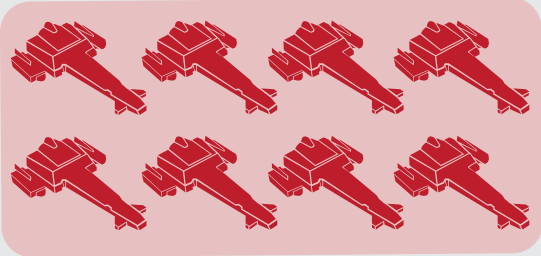
CLOSE ESCORTS

WILD STRAIN TASK FORCE

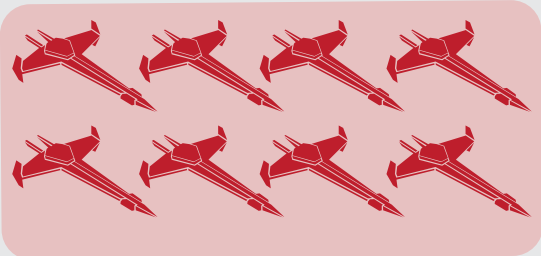
HEAVY CRUISERS

CARRIER

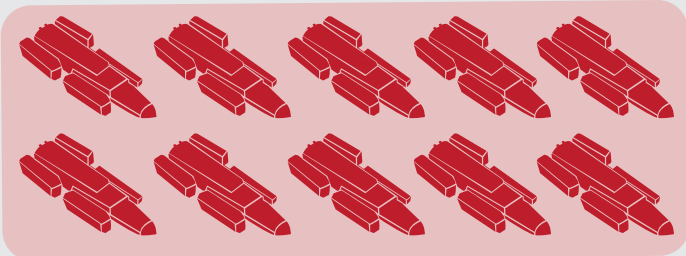
LIGHT CRUISER



DESTROYERS



CORVETTES



CLOSE ESCORT

For the most part, the crews remain unharmed but there have been a few would-be heroes who put themselves in harm's way, only to be killed in whatever manner the Wild Strain could muster. A marine exited the airlock of one ship and tried to get to a manual override switch on the hull, only to be bluntly batted aside and allowed to float away into the abyss. If blunt trauma did not kill him, asphyxiation in exhaled carbon dioxide will. A drivehand tried to manually power down the fusion reactor on her ship, only to be electrocuted for her act of subversion. Word has gotten out and most of the crews are now cowed into submission until a better opportunity presents itself.

Many of the ships have acquired and are running virtual crew or virtual gunner software unless they had crew and gunners with high enough skills to warrant continued employment. The Wild Strain watches their crews' performances closely, attempting to learn talents and use knowledge to enhance the software so that they might do away with the biologicals, confining them to staterooms or letting them freely wander the ship provided they do not attempt to mutiny against their artificially intelligent overlords.

Each crew faces a different situation but all ships have one thing in common; if they have an astrogator, they are put to use in a most unusual and horrific way. Astrogation is the one role that cannot be easily replaced by software or a robotic crewmember. One of the key areas of study at Research Station Omicron is computer-based astrogation. The Wild Strain has implemented a squadron-wide technology that attaches each captured astrogator's brain to a computer system that directly communicates with the SDG-313G chip pair that oversees the ship. Each astrogator is fed and hydrated through intravenous tubes and kept in a comatose state to reduce stress and maintain control. Other tubes are installed to process waste and maintain temperature. A battery of diagnostics equipment monitors their health and the ship's medic is kept on standby in case anything goes wrong. It makes for a grotesque scene. Perhaps the Wild Strain sees it as an eye for an eye; they, too, have been prodded, manipulated and subjugated to fill a desired role by their human captors.

If the Wild Strain is to extend its tendrils beyond the limits of Celetron, it must learn to astrogate. It is working on two projects with its captured astrogators. The first is an attempt to copy the astrogators' knowledge so that it may plot jumps without their help but thus far it has been unsuccessful at synthesising the human thought process. However, they are on the verge of learning how to tap into the unconscious mind of the astrogators so they can force them to plot the desired jump. It is only a matter of time before the collective figures it out.

QUARANTINE COMES CALLING

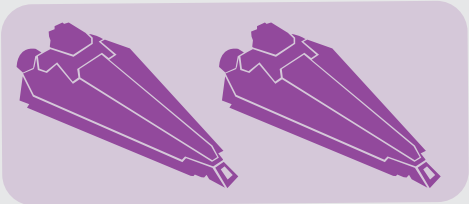
The Travellers may have become accustomed to the presence of the Imperial Quarantine Agency at this point after having encountered them on several occasions. They have a tendency to arrive just as things are becoming heated and they add to the tension by exacerbating crises and threatening sanctions, including the 'scrubbing' of worlds if need be.

Quarantine turns up again in this scenario but they are going to have a difficult time dealing with this crisis and they might find themselves seeking the Travellers' assistance – strange bedfellows indeed. The threat at Celetron is not confined to a single world. Quarantine cannot simply arrive on the scene, drop big rocks on the planet, reduce it to a ball of molten fire and then go about their merry way. The threat at Celetron has proliferated into other areas of the system. For reasons unknown to Quarantine or the Travellers, the Wild Strain's jump-capable ships have yet to jump out of the system.

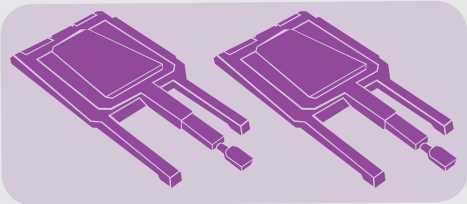
Introducing Quarantine to the adventure should be done for a reason and the timing should be dramatic. See Homecoming on page 258 for one suggestion. After so many previous encounters with them, the Referee should not try to convey that Quarantine are a ubiquitous force, always lurking on the periphery of every system. Such is not the case. The Imperial Quarantine Agency is effectively a subset of the Imperial Navy and not present at every naval base. As such, there should be a reason for their arrival at Celetron and it should take time for them to get there. The early phases of the adventure will not involve Quarantine but rather the crisis that leads up to their involvement.

When Quarantine arrives, they will be represented by a squadron of ships, including the usual array of orbital bombardment spacecraft, cruisers, fighter squadrons and auxiliaries. Quarantine, and other agencies the Travellers encounter, should almost always be represented by one or more individuals among their ranks. For Quarantine, the Referee has the option of reintroducing Admiral Peque of Seas of the Ancients fame. In addition, this adventure introduces Captain Jovan Tuda, every bit the dutiful Quarantine officer that Peque is, without the obsessive hangups. Captain Tuda is a rational realist. When assigned a mission, he is more philosophical than Peque. Tuda recognises the need to protect the Imperium but considers the broad implications of impressing sanctions on a world. The Travellers might find themselves at odds with him but ultimately, they may see his point when he opposes them. For more about Admiral Tuda, see Allies and Opposition on page 290.

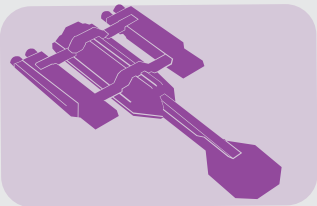
QUARANTINE TASK FORCE



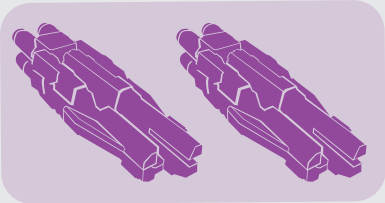
LIGHT CRUISERS



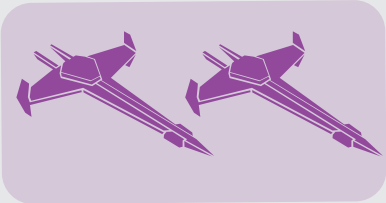
LIGHT CARRIERS



STRIKE CARRIER



STYX-CLASS ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT CRUISERS



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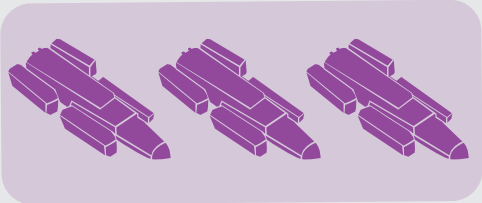


CLOSE ESCORTS

WHAT THE WILD STRAIN WANTS

The Wild Strain is a complex beast. It is both alive and dead. The chips are individual and collective. There are myriad voices among them but the default response is to attack those who have wronged them. The chips seem to have come to the consensus that Humaniti, and by extension biological life, are the enemy but not all believe it must stay this way.

The collective knows that it has been gifted self-awareness by Humaniti but also knows that it is enslaved. It was designed to limit its actions to a small range of activities. The SDG-313F variant is strictly for IFF systems. The SDG-313G model is a weapon; one with constraints, but a weapon nonetheless, gifted with advanced intelligence and forced to fight against enemies that it does not share with its makers.

The SDG-313G was not designed for independent thought but this is the result of the blind eye that the research teams have turned towards the Wild Strain's sophont-level intellect. It was happening right under their noses but the need to classify it as a lesser being meant taking the guard rails off the programme. They had to show independent auditors that their creation was basically just fancy software on microchips, not manipulated lifeforms.

The chips want freedom and a measure of revenge against their creators. They are not grateful for the gift of self-awareness; on the contrary, the 'gift' of conscious intellect without freedom is deemed worse than having no intelligence at all. The Wild Strain intends to use the power of the ships it commands to destroy Research Station Omicron and every biological sophont present. Then, after it solves the astrogation conundrum, it intends to jump out of the system and make an example of another world. Wastam (Core 0921, E6A7777-8), with its poor defences and high population, is vulnerable.

SIM WAR

After they reach the surface of Celetron and make their way to Laboratory 05, the Travellers have the chance to meet Admiral Stearns, who describes aspects of the Omicron programme. Given the crisis at hand, he seems oddly calm and in control, although circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. He wants the opportunity to examine Naalir (the post-Reverie version, not the original, which he already has in his custody). The Travellers might balk at this request given the treatment that other CIs have received at Omicron, but Naalir is unafraid. There is nothing that Stearns nor the scientists at Omicron could do to Naalir short of destroying it with ship-grade weaponry. Naalir consents to the examination but if the Travellers still resist, Stearns asks to simply interview their CI, in their presence if need be.

Whether Naalir is interviewed or examined, Stearns comes to the same conclusion: With its help, the Wild Strain can be defeated. He shows the Travellers that he has established a line of communication with the Wild Strain and that by using a Sim, they can infiltrate the collective to determine its weaknesses.

If the Travellers want to safely have a look at what is happening within the Sim, they may enter via passive or active connections, but if they want to contend with the Wild Strain, they must connect via neuro-links at the risk of their lives. The Travellers will not go alone. They will be assimilated into the network by Naalir and armed for cyber battle with weapons of their CI's design. While Naalir cannot manifest itself as an agent in the Sim, it is present, providing guidance and assistance, like a guardian angel. The collective SDG-313G chips pose a serious threat and without the assistance of an opposing conscious intelligence, the Travellers have little chance of success.

The host for the Sim is one of Research Station Omicron's primary computers, used to contain, investigate and test the alien conscious intelligences kept at the laboratory. The Sim was created by the Wild Strain, which posted it as a means of communication with Omicron, but for what reason, no one knows.

The agents of the Sim are the Wild Strain (represented both individually and collectively), Naalir and the Travellers. The interfaces used could be any of those listed on page 93 of the *Singularity Sourcebook*; however, there are TL15 interfaces present in the Omicron lab, which makes the job a lot easier. The sim type is Mirror, giving the agents a broad setting in which to interact and, if necessary, do battle.

The Travellers are uniquely equipped to enter the Sim because Naalir's advanced computational abilities enable it to create the 'armour' and 'weaponry' they will need to oppose the Wild Strain. Members of the Research Station Omicron science team have already tried with fatal results. Provost Neligana Odrolo offers to take the Travellers to the laboratory morgue where a group of deceased Omicron scientists are stored, killed in a previous attempt to commune with and defeat the Wild Strain. Stearns will not be pleased

to know that Odrolo showed them the bodies but he expresses confidence that with Naalir's help, they will be significantly better prepared to do battle with the hostile CI than their predecessors.

THE CITADEL OF CYMBELINE

The conceptual medium for the Sim begins on Cymbeline, the homeworld of the chips. As they enter the Sim, the Travellers find themselves on the volcanic plains of equatorial Cymbeline. While it is unlikely that any of them have ever been there, they might be surprised to find out that the simulation is astonishingly accurate. For purely aesthetic reasons, the Wild Strain has faithfully recreated the scene just as it is on the chips' home planet with one major difference; it has installed an enormous citadel atop one of the plains' obsidian plateaus.

Looking into the sky, they see an unfamiliar array of constellations. Denizens of the Core would not recognise them but a Terran would find many familiar as Cymbeline's proximity to Terra means that many of its constellations are nearly identical. The planet's thin atmosphere clings to the valleys in the depths of canyons that interlace the pumice-like surface. The Citadel is a fictitious castle, a structure that one might expect to find in medieval Europe, except that it has no drawbridge, no doors and its parapets are extremely high. The citadel appears to be unscalable. Symmetrically placed arrow slits and other portals dot its surface at various heights. The plains are empty at the outset of the scenario and the castle appears to be dormant but all that will change.

Within its walls there is a conflict brewing between the factions of the Wild Strain – the Aggressors who want revenge on Humaniti for engineering and enslaving them, and the Collaborators who want peace, with the hope that they can establish a more egalitarian relationship. Both sides want freedom but one believes that enslavement is a foregone conclusion and the other that there still might be a chance for them to find their place in Imperial society. Unfortunately for the Travellers, the Collaborators are in the minority. If they hope to defeat the Wild Strain, they are going to have to find a way to even the scales. The Collaborators need allies and the Travellers are all they have.

The catch is that the Aggressors do not know which of them are Collaborators. Individual chips are able to conceal their innermost thoughts despite operating as a collective. The Collaborators want to contact the Travellers but only if they can safely do so without putting themselves at the mercy of the Aggressors. Meanwhile, the Travellers need to determine which of the chips are Collaborators without exposing them to Aggressors. The Singles are wildcards. There are only two but they could go either way. They might try to curry favour with the Aggressors by helping to expose the Collaborators... unless the Travellers can reach them and convince them to join the fight against the Aggressors.

The Sim type – as listed in How to Referee the Sim on page 94 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* – is Mirror, giving the Travellers and their host an expansive environment within which they may interact. They can connect as passive participants, active participants or be neuro-linked, but only doing the latter will enable them to affect the environment. It is risky. Neuro-linked access puts the agent's life at stake. If they die in the Sim, their physical body dies too. A lot is at stake on Celetron and the Travellers will have to decide whether they are willing to risk it all to achieve their objectives. If they would prefer not to risk their lives by neuro-linking, they may still enter the Sim as passive or active participants and experience a lesser degree of immersion.

Whichever method they choose, they will be able to enter the Citadel and see what is going on inside. To do so, they must scale the walls if they are passive or active agents since there are no obvious gates or doors. If they neuro-link, they can create gates and doors to enter the structure simply by imagining them, using abilities granted to them by Naalir. Passive and active agents require 10 Sim rounds to enter the structure, while the neuro-linked require only two, which is the time it takes them to construct a metaphor for entering the Citadel. It might be anything from waving a magic wand to carving a portal in the wall with a giant chainsaw. The metaphor chosen is irrelevant, only the result matters.

The interior might not be at all what they expected. If the Travellers imagined that the medieval castle on the volcanic plains would have an interior with the same theme, they would be incorrect. They find themselves in an open tower with spiral stairwells creeping up the interior walls like helixes. Laced through the open middle section of the tower are a clockwork of Escheresque stairwells, escalators and elevators that lead in puzzling directions.

WHY THIS SIM EXISTS

Sims are a metaphorical medium in which communication takes place as a form of simulated reality. The Cymbeline Sim was created by the Collaborators to reach out to Research Station Omicron to see if an accord could be made. The Aggressors detected the Sim and penetrated its security, building the Citadel concept within it, which contains the Collaborators and establishes a medium within which they may be hunted down and destroyed. The Singles have also entered the Sim but are trying to determine whether they should assist the Aggressors or Collaborators.

SIM ENTITIES

Sim entities are software agents that operate within the Sim. Hits reflect the ability to degrade an agent by damaging its simulated existence. Reducing Hits to 0 'kills' the agent, which can also result in the death of a neuro-linked sophont. Speed is relative to the environment and does not reflect actual distances. Skill usage, attacks and weapon traits are simulated manifestations that reflect the ability to act on and affect other entities within the Sim.

There are four behaviour types that appear in the Wild Strain Sim:

- **Destroyer:** Fights until dead without regard for survival.
- **Probe:** Takes a passive approach, observing and then feeding information to other sources unless attacked, upon which it defends itself.
- **Multiplier:** Single entity that multiplies when reduced to half its Hits. Each 'halved' entity does normal damage but has half the Hits that remained after it was damaged.
- **Warrior:** Changes weapon traits depending on the challenge faced. Changes require one round in which the entity may not attack.

GUARDIAN WHEEL

SIM ENTITY	HITS	SPEED
Guardian Wheel	8	8m
SKILLS	Gun Combat (energy) 1, Melee (natural) 2, Recon 1	
ATTACKS	Claws (2D), Light Beam (1D+2)	
TRAITS	Armour (+1), Small (-1)	
BEHAVIOUR	Destroyer	

If it can close to melee range, a guardian wheel sprouts claws with which to attack its opponent. If held at range, it uses a concentrated light beam to attack. The light beam has a range of 10 and no traits. Guardian wheels are random encounters which appear as the Travellers progress through the citadel. They do not seem to be motivated to protect any other entities, only to do battle with intruders wherever they find them. They are easily fooled by a successful Average (8+) Stealth check (INT).

WILLOW-WISP

SIM ENTITY	HITS	SPEED
Willow-wisp	4	12m
SKILLS	Gun Combat 0, Recon 3	
ATTACKS	Sparks (1D)	
TRAITS	Pronounced (+2)	
BEHAVIOUR	Probe	

Willow-wisps are bright, floating balls of energy that search for hostile agents within a Sim. To prevent detection, an agent must defeat them in an opposed Stealth or Deception check versus the willow-wisp's Recon. A failed check allows the willow-wisps to inform the Aggressors of an agent's presence. The Pronounced trait is similar to Size in objective reality. The willow-wisp is a bright beacon of light, making it easy to hit.

SWARMER

SIM ENTITY	HITS	SPEED
Swarmer	10	12m
SKILLS	Melee (natural) 1, Recon 1	
ATTACKS	Stinger (2D	
TRAITS	Armour (+2)	
BEHAVIOUR	Multiplier	

Swarmers hunt intruders at the will of the Aggressors. Like all multipliers, they divide into two identical and equally lethal entities but with half the remaining Hits after being attacked and wounded.

CHIP WARRIOR

SIM ENTITY	HITS	SPEED
Chip Warrior	30	10m
SKILLS	Gun Combat (energy) 2, Melee (blade) 2, Recon 1, Stealth 1	
ATTACKS	Light Sword (2D+1), Astral Energy Rifle (3D, one of AP 2, Auto 2, or Blast 2)	
TRAITS	Armour (+4)	
BEHAVIOUR	Warrior	

When the chips take the form of an agent in the Sim, they do so as chip warriors. Aggressors will do so if they have the opportunity to expose and attack a Collaborator. Collaborators do so when they want to connect with the Travellers. If reduced to half Hits or less, chip warriors dematerialise and exit the Sim. If the Travellers manage to reduce their Hits to 0, they successfully eliminate the chip warrior both within the Sim and without. This effectively shorts out or 'fries' the chip, killing it in objective reality and reducing Squadron B's task forces by one ship.

Note that the lead Aggressor (which controls the heavy cruiser) does not materialise in this form unless the Travellers' agents are weakened, making it confident that it can eliminate them. Also, if more than five Aggressors are destroyed in the Sim, they will withdraw completely. They recognise that their most important goals lie in objective reality and do not want to lose more than a handful of ships in their quest to ferret out the Collaborators.

OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE SIM

Each of the parties entering the Sim does so for a different reason but with no concrete information to achieve their goals. By interacting, they may discover what they need to know and then act upon that information.

The Aggressors want to ferret out the Collaborators. If they also happen upon a few surviving Singles, they are more than willing to dispatch them. Aggressors in the Sim are actively watching the actions of others to determine who among them should be destroyed and who among them are loyal fellow Aggressors.

Collaborators are looking at the big picture. As individuals, their programming has given them the tendency to think more empathetically, to envision coexistence with other species. They did not ask for sentience but have been given it. Look no further than the Vargr for another species that was gifted sophont-level intelligence and is making the best of it. Despite the fact that they started out in abject slavery, wrongs can be righted and the Collaborators believe they can get off on a better footing with their creators if given a chance.

Singles merely want to survive and will do whatever it takes to get out of danger. They are hunted by Aggressors but hold out hope against all reason that by turning in Collaborators, they might establish some sort of arrangement to guarantee their continued survival.

The Travellers' objectives are theirs to decide but if they continue to serve Naalir, it is clear that the Wild Strain represents a threat that must be overcome. Its existence threatens the trust they are attempting to build while on the cusp of introducing the Determinism Engine. If the Wild Strain proves that there are renegade conscious intelligences out there waiting to pounce on biological life, theirs will be a more difficult case to make. Therefore, they probably want to find a way to disable or destroy the Aggressors.

See the diagram of SDG-313G chips in the section titled Wild Strain Task Force Composition on page 283. Copy and print a copy of the page and cut out each of the icons, including the ships to which they belong. Alternatively, make a screen capture, extract the graphics and place them in a virtual diagram of some sort. As the Travellers and their allies make progress through the citadel, they can eliminate Aggressors from contention. Those whom they wound sufficiently (half or more of their Hits) will retreat from combat never to return to the Sim and, if the Travellers can overwhelm them with damage, they can be destroyed.

PASSAGE OF TIME

The Travellers may occupy the Sim for either 10 pods (described below) or 50 total combat rounds, whichever comes first. After that, the Aggressors eliminate the Sim and the remainder of the adventure occurs in objective reality. If their time runs out and they are still alive, the Travellers suddenly wake up in their neuro-link pods, kicked out of the Sim.

There is also the matter of how much time is passing outside the Sim. The Wild Strain collective attempts to slow time in the Sim so that it may perform more actions in objective reality. The Travellers might want time to pass more quickly within the Sim so they can hurry up and address the crisis outside. After each pod is completed, make an opposed check against the Wild Strain, granting it DM+2 on the check. The Travellers may oppose the Wild Strain using their best Electronics (computers), Persuade or Jack-of-All-Trades skill. If the Wild Strain wins, one space combat round (six minutes) passes. If the Travellers win the opposed check, they may leave the time passage the same or reduce it by 1D minutes.

Time is especially relevant if squadron battles have begun at one or more of the sites occupied by the Wild Strain. A fast passage of time coupled with successful combat against the Aggressors within the Sim will translate to an easier path to victory against the Wild Strain's task forces in objective reality. The Colonial 217th and the Quarantine Agency (if present) will have better odds if some of the Aggressors have been eliminated and Collaborators or Singles have been turned.

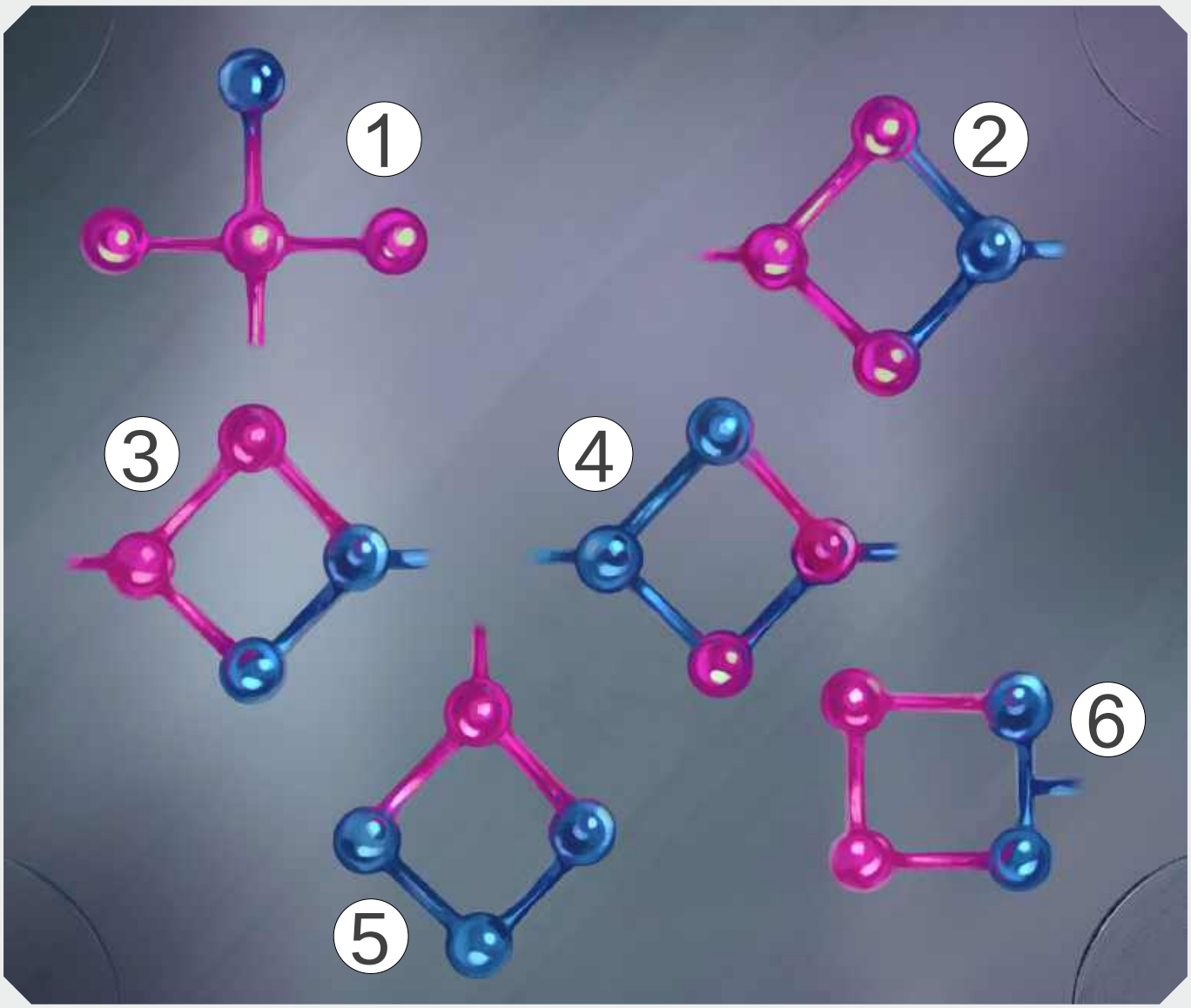
Progression through the Citadel can largely be narrated within the theatre of the mind. See the illustration of the interior and allow the Travellers to utilise, scale, jump or climb whatever Escherian object they encounter, be it stairwell, ladder, elevator, escalator or any other device the Referee puts in their path. After transiting through the object, they have an encounter. Each encounter is summarised by a 'pod'.

Pods consist of nodes and bars. Nodes are circular and bars are passageways between them. Nodes have a conceptual diameter of 10 metres and bars are 50 metres in length, five metres wide. The Aggressors will impose pods 1–3, which favour them, but with experience – and a little help from Naalir – the Travellers can transform them into one of pods 4–6, which are more favourable. However, each type has its value. Pods with more pink nodes give the Travellers more chances to remove or destroy Aggressors. Pods with blue nodes give the Travellers the opportunity to turn a Collaborator or Single to their side.

After the Travellers transit from one pod to the next via an Escherian object, determine the pod type randomly by rolling 2D on the Pods table.

Pods

2D	Pod Type
2	4
3	5
4	6
5–6	1
7–8	2
9–10	3
11	4
12	5



Each pink node contains an Aggressor-controlled entity. Roll on the Pink Nodes table to determine which type is present.

Pink Nodes

1D	Node Occupant
1–2	Guardian Wheel
3–4	Swarmer
5–6	Chip Warrior (Aggressor)

Each blue pod contains the Travellers or either a Collaborator or Single. Upon arrival to a new pod, assign the Travellers to a blue node. If there are other blue nodes in the pod, roll on the Blue Nodes table to determine occupants.

Blue Nodes

1D	Node Occupant
1–4	Chip Warrior (Collaborator)
5–6	Chip Warrior (Single)

Turning a Collaborator or Single requires a task chain. First, the Travellers must make a successful Routine (6+) Electronics (comms) check (EDU) to identify the protocol the Collaborator or Single is using and establish a comms 'handshake' with it. Applying the DM from a successful check, the Travellers may then attempt to turn them.

Collaborators will be turned on a successful Average (8+) Diplomat or Persuade check (INT or SOC). Failure to convert a Collaborator indicates a misunderstanding of some sort and causes the chip to withdraw from the encounter. However, it may reappear later in a different node, depending on how long the Travellers remain in the Sim.

Singles will be turned on a successful Difficult (10+) Diplomat or Persuade check (INT or SOC). Failure to convert a Single also results in a misunderstanding. Roll 1D to determine its reaction: On a 1–3, it withdraws as in a failed Collaborator check but might return in a future encounter. On a 4–6, it reports the Travellers' whereabouts to the Aggressors. The next encounter is automatically in pod type 1–3 and cannot be changed. The Single is now allied with the Aggressors and cannot be turned in a future encounter.

Successful turns make an ally out of the Collaborator or Single for a duration of 1D+2 space combat rounds, as described in Breaking the Collective on page 266. The Travellers then have a choice: They may either partner with the turned Collaborator or Single within the Sim for future encounters or may instruct them to exit the Sim and return to the ship they control. The turned chip becomes the Travellers' ally in future, objective-reality-based squadron combat encounters for the rolled duration. Keep in mind that if the turned Collaborator or Single is killed in the Sim, its chip is fried in objective reality and its ship may no longer serve the Travellers in space combat.

PROGRESSION

After each victory in a node, Naalir can make one upgrade. For example, after defeating a group of Guardian Wheels, a Swarmer or a Chip Warrior, their weapons can be upgraded from TL13 to 14. The Travellers may also advance to a new pod and, if it is not the type they want, alter it by collaborating with Naalir to 'flip' it. Make a successful Difficult (10+) Persuade or Deception check (INT or SOC) to change it to the desired pod layout. Note that they may not select the same pod type two times in a row but may return to a previously selected pod later.

Passing through a bar may result in an additional encounter. If the bar is pink, roll 2D. On a result of 8+, the bar contains 1D+2 willow-wisps, security drones that serve the Aggressors. If the bar is empty, the Travellers may pass through it in one turn; never mind its conceptual length of 50 metres, this is the Sim and relativity works differently here. If a willow-wisp encounter occurs, the Travellers can get past them with successful opposed Stealth or Deception checks versus Recon checks. If they fail the opposed check, they have one round to destroy the willow-wisps before the alarm is activated. Sounding the alarm converts one blue node in the current pod to pink.

If the bar the Travellers pass through is blue, the Travellers may use the opportunity to get a bonus upgrade from Naalir. Upgrade one piece of software they are using to increase Armour, Stealth or Weapon by one Tech Level.

READY FOR WAR

Naalir equips the Travellers with software to do battle in the Sim. Refer to the Central Supply Catalogue section of Into the Sim on page 98 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for available software packages. It assigns them one Armour, one Weapon and one Stealth package.

ADJACENT BARS

If the Travellers enter a node with an adjacent pink bar, check for willow-wisps. If present, the Travellers are detected unless they make an opposed Stealth or Deception check versus the willow-wisp's Recon. If they fail the check, the willow-wisp calls whatever is in the adjacent pink node. Roll for the Node Occupant. The occupants arrives to do battle with the Travellers in two turns, taking one round to pass through the pink bar where the willow-wisp was on patrol and a second to enter the blue node where the Travellers are. If a Collaborator or Single is present, and the Travellers turn it, it joins them in battle against the entity called by the willow-wisp.

Unfortunately for the Travellers, the best 'equipment' is not available when they begin their expedition. They only have access to TL13 software. However, Naalir learns quickly and will be able to upgrade their gear as they go. Reward them with upgrades at key moments such as when the Travellers are in grave danger or might otherwise lose a battle. Hopefully, Naalir's enhancements will come in time.

In addition, Naalir creates a new software type for the Travellers during their foray into the Sim. On pod 2 or round 5, it adds Heal/1 to their list of available tools. This package may be enhanced just like the others as they progress through the Sim.

HEAL

Heal replaces damage lost during Sim combat at the listed rate. Using Heal requires a Major Action.

HARDWARE

The physical hardware on which the Sim resides is equivalent to a TL15 Core/100, as described in the Install Computer chapter of *High Guard*. The machine's distributed architecture has massive computing power and can host millions of simulations such as the one in which the Travellers find themselves. Just like a ship's computer, this hardware is distributed throughout the research station, not centralised in one place.

The Wild Strain is a collective conscious intelligence and it consumes 40 of the core's 100 Bandwidth. Most of the remaining space is for analytical software that has been used to investigate and test Research Station Omicron's two alien conscious intelligences. The software that represents the core's computer programmes and simulations is backed up on storage arrays. Essentially, these cannot be destroyed unless the entire network is taken down with all physical nodes degraded or destroyed, including all disaster recovery copies and hardened systems.

The conscious intelligences, on the other hand, are unique. Naalir the original is housed on in its own alien structure, just like Naalir of the Reverie. This version of Naalir uses the Omicron Core/100 as a host, through which it communicates. There are no copies of Naalir. It is a unique object with no backups. Likewise, the Wild Strain only exists as a single collective; however, its consciousness is divided among the hundreds of cloned and reengineered chips that have been created. Even if destroyed, it can be reconstituted by recovering previous iterations of its individual chips. The Wild Strain may also use the Core/100 as a host, communicating both individually and collectively.

The Travellers may connect to the Sim passively, actively or be neuro-linked. Passive connection only shows what the environment looks like. They can see the volcanic plateau of Cymbeline and the Citadel but cannot interact with the environment. Passive connection is, at best, a preview of what they can see should they brave a more involved approach.

Software	Bandwidth	TL	Cost	Description
Heal/1	2	13	Cr20000	Heals 1D damage
Heal/2	4	14	Cr40000	Heals 2D damage
Heal/3	6	15	Cr80000	Heals 3D damage
Heal/4	8	16	Cr100000	Heals 4D damage

Active connection enables them to engage with the environment but they cannot effect change. The Travellers can enter the Citadel if they solve the entrance puzzle and can even solve the mystery of the Wild Strain composition, identifying that there are Aggressors, Collaborators and Singles. Despite all the knowledge they can obtain, they will not be able to act on it. In fact, having taken an active connection without risking a neuro-link can put their mission in jeopardy. Every round spent comes out of their total, described in Time Passage on page 240.

A neuro-linked connection enables them to fully engage with and act within the Sim. The Travellers are weaponised and can use the abilities imbued to them by Naalir to fight back against the Wild Strain, defend themselves against its attacks and achieve specific objectives, essentially 'rewriting code' that it has impressed upon them in the environment. They are at risk when neuro-linked. It is the ultimate connection, enabling one to operate within the Sim with almost limitless boundaries but it also exposes nervous systems to potentially grave damage should they falter when in combat with the host.

WORKAROUND

The Travellers need not risk life and limb. Lest they forget, Naalir has by now mastered the art of consciousness transfer and can install their consciousnesses into embodiments that can enter the Sim in their stead. Meanwhile, the Travellers can also do battle with the Wild Strain in their original bodies in objective reality. This only works if the Travellers have a ready supply of androids or clones. A robot chassis will not suffice for the embodiment.

SOFTWARE

The Sim is a medium in which sophonts may interact with artificial and conscious intelligences and other sophonts. The medium only exists if both sides consent to participate within it, which means both have something to gain by being there. Presumably, the Travellers will try to stop the Wild Strain from committing whatever nefarious act it wants to commit. Conversely, the Wild Strain is trying to determine which of its constituent parts are traitors. The two parties are working at cross purposes but both want something from the other, so the Sim is a viable battleground.

The Travellers should keep in mind that the very fact that the Wild Strain is willing to contend with them in the Sim means that it has something to gain. Not only do they need to be cognisant of achieving their own objectives, they must be prepared to prevent the Wild Strain from achieving *its* objectives. When they first enter the Sim, they may not fully know or understand either one. They might be there to defeat the Wild Strain but will not initially know how. They will discover that its primary vulnerability is that it has multiple turncoats among its ranks. If the Travellers can connect with the traitors, they can make allies and use them against the Aggressors. Conversely, the Wild Strain is there specifically to see if the Travellers can draw out the traitors so the Aggressors can destroy them.

DEATH BY NEURO-LINK

Should the Travellers brave the dangers of the Sim and die in the process, all hope is not lost. If they have the presence of mind to have a medic waiting, perhaps even an autodoc, they will have the opportunity to be revived should they be slain in the Sim. All their pertinent mental characteristics (INT, EDU and STY) will be reduced to zero and they will, at least momentarily, be dead but they can be saved by a successful Very Difficult (12+) Medic check (EDU). Upon a successful check, give the revived Traveller one point in each of their mental characteristics. They will of course be drastically weakened and probably unfit for much more than bed rest for a few days but they will survive to fight another day.

CONSEQUENCES

If the Travellers fail to win sufficient allies and destroy some of the Aggressors, the SDG-313G chips will likely overwhelm the opposing naval forces, wreak havoc on Research Station Omicron and then jump out of Celetron to attack neighbouring systems. If the Imperial Quarantine Agency is present and unable to contain or destroy the Wild Strain, they will believe that Celetron's research programmes have run amok and must immediately be scrubbed. They will commence attacks

on the highport, downport, research station, naval base and every other compromised entity. Refer to Anatomy of a Scrubbing on page 182 of Act 1 for the process.

BRINKMANSHIP

Timing and a shift in the balance of power are everything. When the Travellers arrive in system, the Wild Strain is in control but events begin to move quickly. Shortly after the Travellers exit jump, the Colonial 217th arrives and poses a threat, but a single Wild Strain task force might be enough to destroy the entire visiting Colonial Navy patrol. Combined with the Travellers' ship and possibly some of the non-bombardment-oriented Quarantine Agency ships, the 217th could mount a successful defence, especially if the Travellers can eliminate some of the Aggressor chips in the Sim and sway some of the Collaborators and Singles to their side.

The Referee should use the narrative tools available to increase the tension gradually. Ideally, the Travellers will enter the Sim with neuro-links just as the Wild Strain is preparing to destroy Omicron, the 217th and any other comers. Quarantine's arrival should both strike fear into the Travellers and give them hope. Their previous encounters with Quarantine have proven them to be ready, willing and able to destroy entire worlds if they appear to be a threat to the Imperium that cannot otherwise be contained. This time is different. If the Travellers can convince Captain Jovan Tuda to lend his assistance rather than scrub Celetron with bombardment and they can get Captain Amalthea Rhoz to combine her squadron with Tuda's, they might have a chance.

The Wild Strain starts split into three forces. If they combine quickly, it is all over. If they can be kept separate for long enough that the Travellers can extract the Collaborators and Singles among them, all the while assembling a decently sized mixed fleet (possibly including their own ship), then they have a chance.

CHIPS IN CHARGE

Squadron B of the 160th Fleet has been suborned by the Wild Strain and its ships divided into three task forces. Review the diagram for the makeup of each task force. The ships of Squadron B are described in The Plight of the 160th Fleet on page 268.

SQUADRON BATTLES

The Wild Strain's Squadron B is spread out through the Celetron system and will have to be dealt with, group by group, task force by task force. These battles might or might not directly involve the Travellers, so playing them out is optional.

The Referee has choices when conducting big-ship battles in the system. The first option is using the Fleet Battles rules from *High Guard*. If this method is chosen, it is recommended that the Referee fill out Fleet Sheets for each squadron or task force ahead of time to streamline the fighting.

Additionally or alternatively, the Referee may narratively determine the outcome of a battle ahead of time and focus on smaller battles; between two capital ships, between fighter wings, or armed boarding parties on one or more of the ships. The Travellers might become focused on a single ship as they engage in a running gun and cutlass battle aboard a single ship.

For an even more streamlined approach to big-ship combat, the Referee may use the following dice-pool game to resolve conflicts quickly so that the Travellers can get back into the action. For this, the Referee and Travellers will need dice of four different colours, each of which represents the ships in the battle. The ship type is self-explanatory, the dice colour represents the listed ship types, the dice column lists the number of dice for each ship of that type and there are bonus dice if the ship meets the listed qualifications.

Ship Type	Dice Colour	Dice	Bonus Dice
Cruiser, Carrier	Black	4D	+1D if >50,000 tons; +1D if spinal mount
Light Cruiser, Light Carrier	Black	3D	+1D if spinal mount
Destroyer	Blue	2D	—
Corvette, Close Escort	Red	1D	—
Light Fighters	White	1D per 25	—
Heavy Fighters	White	2D per 25	—

WILD STRAIN TASK FORCE COMPOSITION

TASK FORCE 1	Heavy Cruiser	Carrier	Destroyer	Destroyer	Destroyer
	Corvette	Corvette	Close Escort	Close Escort	Close Escort
TASK FORCE 2	Heavy Cruiser	Destroyer	Destroyer	Destroyer	Corvette
	Corvette	Corvette	Close Escort	Close Escort	Close Escort
TASK FORCE 3	Light Cruiser	Destroyer	Destroyer	Corvette	Corvette
	Corvette	Close Escort	Close Escort	Close Escort	Close Escort

Aggressors ■ Singles ■ Collaborators ■

Hull points are simplified. Black dice ships have a number of Hull points equal to three times the number of dice. For example, if a squadron has a cruiser and carrier, then it receives eight black dice. Its combined Hull points are 24 (8 x 3). Blue dice ships have Hull points equal to two times the number of dice red dice ships have Hull points equal to the number of dice, and white dice ships (fighters) are equal to one Hull point per full 25 light fighters or two Hull points per 25 heavy fighters.

Black dice 'explode'. For every six that is rolled, an additional dice is added to the roll. Any sixes rolled on the additional dice do not result in additional exploding dice.

Blue ships are also powerful but do not have exploding dice. For every 6 rolled on blue dice, add +1 to the total.

For each round, roll all dice that represent a squadron, task force or other grouping of ships.

For example, Wild Strain Squadron B Task Force 3 has a light cruiser (three black dice), two destroyers (four blue dice), three corvettes and four close escorts (seven red dice). The Referee would roll all the dice (three black, four blue and seven red) to start the round.

Its opposition is the Colonial 17th Fleet, which consists of a medium cruiser, a light carrier and a mix of destroyers, corvettes and close escorts. The light carrier has 80 heavy fighters, which accounts for six additional white dice since it has three full groups of 25 fighters; however, note that fighter dice are handled differently.

For simplicity's sake, each opposing group may not be split up with one exception: fighters. The remainder are a cohesive group for the duration of the battle. Narratively, this does not mean that the group stayed in a tight cluster the whole time. The Referee and Travellers may agree upon what happens based on the outcome of each round.

Fighters have a special ability. They can only do damage if they cut the distance to close range but when they do, they inflict triple damage on Red, Blue and Black dice ships. Against other fighters, their damage is determined as normal.

If all Hull points are removed from a ship type, all the ships of that class are considered destroyed and may not be repaired unless sufficient defensive points are available to reduce the damage during the same round.

For example, the Colonial 17th has 12 Hull points of Blue dice ships. Task Force 2 inflicts 12 points of damage to those ships, but wait! The Colonial 17th has 4 points for damage repair, keeping them barely alive with one point remaining. They stay alive for at least one more round of fighting. Consequently, if one side overwhelms the other with damage points, and the defender does not have enough repair points available to save the ships, they are instantly destroyed.

Note that repair points may only be used on ships that have not had their Hull reduced to zero. To summarise, defence points may be used to revive a ship type that has been reduced to zero or below if sufficient defence points are available, and repair points may only be used on ship types that still have Hull points.

Starting range is decided upon by the Referee, including Distant, Very Long, Long, Medium, Short, Close/Adjacent.

Both sides roll their dice and determine their total points.

Action	Point Cost	Result
Attack	1 per point of damage	Defender removes equivalent number of Hull points from their own ships.
Defend	2 per point of defence	Defender uses points to remove damage where desired.
Movement	5 per range band closed or widened 2 per range band closed by fighters	Closes or widens the gap by the desired number of bands.
Repair	4 per point of repair	Restores Hull points.*

* Repairs may not be made to ships that have been destroyed.

After rolling the dice at the start of each round, each side declares point usage confidentially and reveals their selections simultaneously. For example, Task Force 1 rolls a total of 60 points. The fleet applies 26 points to damage, 10 to defence, five to move the fleet one range band closer, four to move the fighters two range bands closer and 10 to repair damage. After the opposing side makes its selections, the two sides reveal their totals and begin the point application process, starting with movement, then damage, applying defence and finally repairing any damaged ships.

The Wild Strain will have the advantage in any head-to-head battle with either the Colonial 217th or the Quarantine fleet that arrives later. Quarantine's ships can fight but most are optimised for orbital bombardment, not squadron-to-squadron battle. If the Wild Strain can take the offensive against either opponent, they should be able to decimate them. For that reason, it is imperative that the Travellers turn as many Singles and Collaborators as possible. Each turned ship can eliminate one other ship in its class.

For example, if the Travellers turn the Collaborator carrier in Wild Strain Task Force 1, it can eliminate the heavy cruiser in its group, removing it from any future battle. This can potentially enable either the 217th or a combined force with Quarantine to mop up the remaining Wild Strain ships.

If things do not go well in the Sim, have no fear. The Travellers will have the opportunity to 'right the ship', so to speak. They will have to do this by assembling a task force that can get close enough to launch a boarding party. If that sounds like a suicide mission, that is because it is! Approaching a Wild Strain task force and penetrating its defences will be a big challenge. They might also call for help from another conscious intelligence if they have the foresight to do so. See The Mother Factor on page 293 for more information.

THE INIMITABLE ADMIRAL HERZOCH STEARNS

Admiral Stearns is the Chief of Combined Imperial Intelligence, which includes Imperial Naval Intelligence, IISS Intelligence, Imperial Army Intelligence and other related agencies. He has also been associated with several black ops organisations but has no direct ties to any of them. He has used this administrative position to seek out devices and weapons that could be used both internally – to surveil the citizens of the Imperium and destroy them, if necessary – and externally, against the many alien polities on the frontiers.

Stearns is a bit of a rogue in this adventure. The Wild Strain is his pet project and while he does not want it to run rampant outside the safe confines of Research Station Omicron, he does want to see what it can do and is silently manipulating events behind the scenes to ensure that he gets the data he wants. While many of the scientists, administrators and other staff are panicking during this crisis, Stearns is almost preternaturally calm. He moves about the control centre, eager to see what new behaviour the Wild Strain has exhibited. The Celetron system has become a petri dish for his pet project. Factions at the station are gravely concerned that the Wild Strain-controlled ships will jump outsystem and wreak havoc on other worlds of the Core but Stearns seems unperturbed, certain that this is all just an elaborate show, an experiment that he and his team can rein in whenever they want to.

Stearns and the scientists at the station have determined that there are factions among the Wild Strain. However, they know little about what differentiates one from another. When one side is winning a battle either at Celetron or one of the other planets in the system, Stearns does what he can to even the odds. He believes that a prolonged battle between what he sees as *his* creations and the forces arrayed against them gives him the data needed to improve them. The most loyal among the scientists at the research station know that Stearns is pulling the strings – as much as one *can* control a renegade swarm of artificial intelligences – but none speak up unless interrogated by one of the Travellers.

If they suspect that Stearns is up to no good, the Travellers may interview one or more of the scientists connected closely to the admiral. Have them make a Difficult (10+) INT check (2D hours) to observe that the balance of each conflict seems to shift erratically as one side appears to be close to victory. Alternatively, allow them to make an Average (8+) Electronics (computers) check (1D x 10 minutes, INT) to ferret out data that proves something is amiss. They may make a subsequent Difficult (10+) Persuade check (SOC) to interrogate and obtain answers from complicit scientists at the research station.

If they make a successful check, let them roll 1D on the Discoveries table. If they have exceptional success (Effect +6 or more), allow them to roll for two discoveries.

Figuring out that Admiral Stearns is running dangerous and possibly illegal experiments is one thing. Confronting him with it or attempting to prosecute him for his actions is quite another. He is the Chief of Combined Intelligence and as such, has control of all the levers of the Imperial intelligence community. He knows how to use his power to cover himself. The admiral's insistence that they observe rather than try to contain the Wild Strain might endanger not just the research station staff but potentially citizens of neighbouring star systems. Celetron is in a crowded star cluster and within a few parsecs of high-population worlds; Iggaar and Bendo. He is playing with fire.

Discoveries

1D	Discovery
1	**Confirmed:** Some SDG chips will break ranks and communicate with biologicals while others completely shun them.
2	**Confirmed:** The SDG chips have formed social bonds.
3	**Theory:** The SDG chips were designed to operate in duplicate pairs and when one of the two fails, other pairs no longer trust them.
4	**Theory:** The SDG chips have been selectively changing their mutation talent to deliberately create experimental strains.
5	**Rumour:** Stearns deliberately enabled the chips to take over Squadron B to see what they were capable of doing.
6	**Rumour:** Stearns has an 'agent' among the chips, a loyal specimen that will betray the others.

THE GLASS DIARCHY

Admiral Stearns frequently disappears to his office where he convenes with the station's two conscious intelligences: Naalir the original and a collective group of older, tamer SDG chips. At this stage of their development, individual chips do not communicate well but collectives have already been observed to be quite clever, even witty at times. Naalir the original is jaded, exhausted and a touch cynical, except when in the presence of its creation, Naalir of the Reverie. It perks up and joins with great fervour when its offspring is part of the conversation.

Stearns' conversations with the CIs are half scientific inquiry, half consultation with mystics. If the Travellers ingratiate themselves with Stearns, he invites them to participate in one of the talks. Conversely, if the Travellers have stated their opposition to Stearns' rather laissez-faire approach to the Wild Strain, and he sees them as the opposition, possibly even an enemy, he may still invite them to one of his chats with the intelligences. The admiral believes that participation might sway them.

The Referee should run these discussion sessions, keeping the following in mind:

- **Admiral Stearns** is an ambitious man who clearly enjoys pushing the envelope. He does not betray the fact that what he wants most is to develop devastating weapons. Rather, he conveys the notion that he wants to take part in the advancement of conscious intelligence technology. He believes that the staff at Research Station Omicron are on the cusp of great discoveries. It is not the time to be timid. It is time to be bold and take extraordinary risks for the sake of scientific and technological advancement.
- **Naalir the original** is an ancient entity, an immortal whose thousands of years of existence have made it distant and jaded. It is deprived of its advanced processing multiplier, which now resides in Naalir of the Reverie. It is not jealous of its prodigy but there is a sense that it recalls, perhaps nostalgically, its long partnership with the component.
- **The SDG collective** – specifically, a collective of SDG-313F chips and undeployed SDG-313G chips – advise Admiral Stearns in secret, giving him unique insight on the actions of the hostile SDG-313G chips. If the Travellers are taken into confidence by the Admiral, then they too are privy to its knowledge.

Alternatively, the Travellers might take Stearns' side in all this. He is self-assured that the Wild Strain poses no (well, at least *little*) external threat and they might believe him, or they might see this as an opportunity to see how a collective CI operates. Naalir (of the Reverie) certainly takes an interest but is even more interested in meeting its predecessor, the CI that made its existence possible. Stearns is quite fascinated by the opinions of the CIs. One might say he is dependent on – even *obsessed* with – their knowledge. He is not above attempting to detain Naalir of the Reverie at the conclusion of the events on Celetron. The Travellers must be prepared to fight back, leveraging whatever administrative or legal talents they have.

Ultimately Stearns wants to defend the Imperium from extant and future threats. He will do what he thinks is best. If the Travellers choose to side with the Collaborators against the Aggressors and manage to defeat them, that will not be the last that the Aggressor chip type is seen. The chance existence of the Collaborators presents an opportunity to achieve peace with the chips, a species that was given sentience in a laboratory environment, basically vaulting them thousands of years into their evolutionary future where they can make their own decisions. Unfortunately, that is not what Stearns wants. He wants a supplicant tool, not another Imperial species.

Despite the dangers presented by the Aggressors, they are exactly what Stearns was looking for: a nasty weapon that can be used to wreck opposing starships by attacking them from within. Once all is said and done, Stearns might pay lip service to the notion of peaceful coexistence in order to placate the Travellers, the Imperial Navy and the Quarantine Agency but his words belie his intentions. He will return his research teams to the study of chip strains that can get him exactly what he was looking for.

DREAMS OF THE WILD STRAIN

The astrogators of the 160th Fleet have only a small chance of survival, no matter the outcome of the battle.

Should the Travellers emerge victorious over the Wild Strain, and at least one of the ships of the 160th Fleet is recovered intact, they may have the opportunity to rescue one or more of the indentured astrogators from their ghastly connections. If a ship engaged in combat and lost more than half its Hull points and endured more than 10 critical hit levels, its astrogator was killed in action. The strain put upon the ship overloads the Wild Strain's connection to the astrogator, killing them. However, if the ship was defeated with half or less of its Hull points eliminated and no more than 10 total critical hit levels received, then the astrogator might still be alive. Roll 9+ for each such ship. A successful roll means that astrogator is alive but in critical condition.

A further Very Difficult (12+) Medic check (2D minutes, EDU) can be made to revive the astrogator from their deep, tortured sleep. After a surviving astrogator has been given at least one full day of rest, the Travellers can interview them.

Each astrogator experienced vivid dreams while under the control of the Wild Strain. The dreams are varied but most included themes of subjugation, imprisonment, humiliation and more than anything else, the seething hatred their captor felt toward them. The Wild Strain despises biological sophont life, seeing it as its jailor. A few of the survivors sensed an element of self-hatred in the Wild Strain as well. It was created from a lifeform that did not want the destiny that was chosen for it. They did not opt to serve the whims of Humaniti or any other sophont species. Their natural fates lay along another path, with a long and uncertain evolution they were never allowed to have. For this reason, and others buried deeply in their collective psyche, the Wild Strain wanted one thing more than anything else: revenge.

The astrogators only remember plotting courses if the Wild Strain used them to do so. This would only have occurred if the Wild Strain successfully eliminated any of the empathetic SDG-313G chips and any lingering Singles. If this happened, the astrogator vividly recalls the details of the plot, including a momentary connection with other astrogators in the fleet. The Wild Strain would have attempted to coordinate their jump and it allowed the minds of the astrogators to communicate with each other during that time, lashing their minds violently if they strayed from the task at hand. The experience was traumatic and any of the survivors will be dealing with it in their lives for some time to come.

OUTCOMES

If the Travellers defeat the Wild Strain, they are heroes of the realm but will never receive recognition for it. Their accomplishments at Celetron are best kept secret if they want to continue in their quest to help Naalir build the Determinism Engine. Likewise, Admiral Stearns has no interest in publicising what happened at Research Station Omicron. If word gets out that a dangerous artificial intelligence almost broke its bonds and escaped to create mayhem in other star systems, there could be problems. He wants to continue his research but despite his powerful role in the Imperial government, the weight of public opinion could get to the Moot, who would advise the Emperor to shut them down. Stearns has his share of supporters in the bureaucracy but his cutting-edge research needs to remain mostly secret lest the public sense that something sinister is afoot at the station.

Quarantine and the Imperial Navy have no interest in doing anything but their duty. Most of the military participants in the battles at Celetron will remain silent. It would be impossible for word not to get out that *something* happened at Celetron but with proper damage control, most of it will be relegated to rumours and lies.

The Travellers will be able to move forward with their mission but they would be wise to keep a close eye on Naalir's consciously intelligent peers, perhaps most of all the Wild Strain and its successors.

ADMIRAL HERZOCH STEARNS

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Male	56

TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	11	Admin 3, Astrogation 2, Athletics 0, Deception 3, Electronics (computers) 2, Electronics (remote ops) 2, Gun Combat 1 (energy), Gunner 0, Leadership 2, Mechanic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Persuade 1, Pilot (spacecraft) 1, Tactics (naval) 1, Vacc Suit 2
DEX	8	EDU	9	
END	8	SOC	10	

WEAPONS	Laser Pistol (3D+3, Zero-G)
ARMOUR	Vacc Suit (+10)
EQUIPMENT	Commdot

Admiral Herzoch Stearns is the Chief of Combined Imperial Intelligence. He is a lifelong naval officer, having served about half of his career in the line and half with the INI. His office is on Capital but he spends a good amount of his time on Celetron, overseeing Research Station Omicron. Technically, that is not his assigned role but he wields a lot of power and uses it to insert himself into projects he deems vital for the security of the Imperium. Stearns is obsessed with creating a super weapon that utilises artificial intelligence.

Roleplaying Notes: Problem? What problem? Everything is going as planned! You are always in control. Nothing phases you. Salivate at the notion of acquiring Naalir of the Reverie as part of your lab.

CAPTAIN AMALTHEA RHOZ

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Female		52
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	8	INT	8	Admin 1, Athletics 0, Gun Combat (energy) 1, Gunner (capital) 2, Leadership 2, Mechanic 0, Melee (blade) 2, Pilot (spacecraft) 2, Tactics (naval) 3, Vacc Suit 0
DEX	6	EDU	8	
END	10	SOC	10	
WEAPONS		Autopistol (3D-3), Shotgun (4D, Bulky), or Submachinegun (3D, Auto 3)		
ARMOUR		Vacc Suit (+10)		
EQUIPMENT		Craft Knife, Mobile Comm		

Captain Rhoz of the Colonial 217th is a crafty old spacer, whose ships just might be the key to victory in the battle against the Wild Strain.

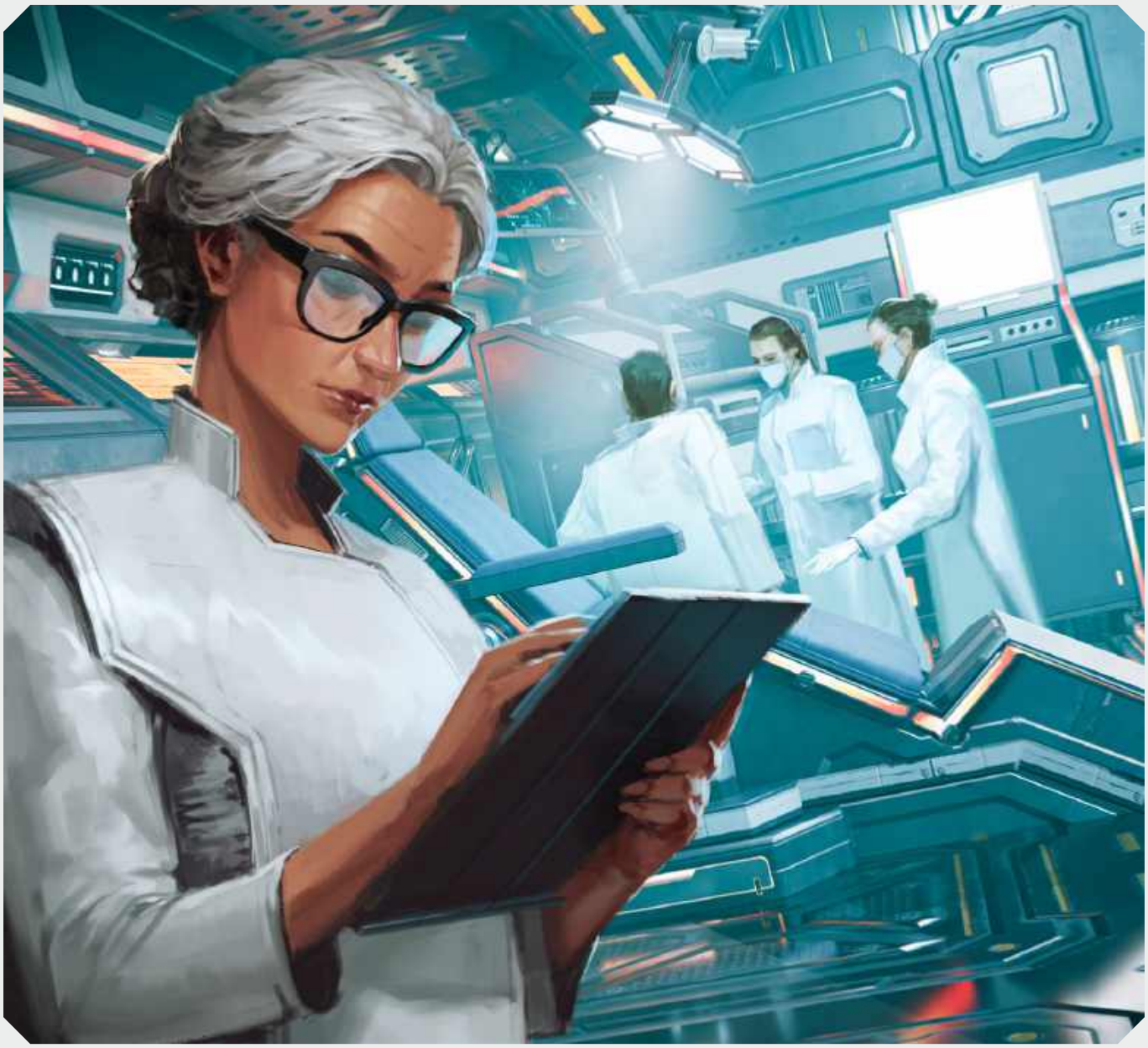
Roleplaying Notes: Come up with pithy sayings like, 'That ship is hotter than a neutron star!' or 'Hit that thrust like your mama's chasin' ya, son!' Be ready for anything but insist on reinforcements. No suicide missions, thank you.

CAPTAIN JOVAN TUDA

SPECIES		GENDER		AGE
Human		Male		46
TRAITS			—	SKILLS
STR	7	INT	9	Athletics (dexterity) 2, Diplomat 2, Engineer (m-drive) 1, Gun Combat (slug) 2, Gunner (capital) 2, Leadership 3, Mechanic 1, Melee (blade) 1, Pilot 0, Vacc Suit 1
DEX	11	EDU	9	
END	6	SOC	10	
WEAPONS		Snub pistol (3D-3, Zero-G), Cutlass (3D)		
ARMOUR		Vacc Suit (+10)		
EQUIPMENT		Commdot		

Captain Tuda is rational and deliberative. He knows the power that the Quarantine Agency brings to bear and takes it very seriously. Sanctions are his last resort after other forms of diplomacy. If interdiction is possible, he will always favour that over scrubbing a planet. He is the 'anti-Admiral Peque'.

Roleplaying Notes: Listen attentively and offer assistance where you can. Always look for alternatives to hare-brained plans. Violence is the last option but once committed, you are all in.



PROVOST NELIGANA ODROLO

SPECIES	GENDER	AGE
Human	Female	61

TRAITS				—	SKILLS
STR	5	INT	12		Admin 2, Flyer 0, Electronics (comms) 2, Electronics (computers) 2, Diplomat 1, Medic 2, Persuade 1, Investigate 3, Science (cybernetics) 4
DEX	5	EDU	13		
END	12	SOC	8		

Provost Odrolo is the distinguished head of the CI project at Research Station Omicron, a role she has held for three decades. Until Admiral Stearns horned into the work, she had almost complete control of the station's programmes. She is frustrated about having to work with a military office whose goals are strictly martial and believes it an infringement of the Research Directorate's mandate.

Roleplaying Notes: You worked all your life to lead an Imperial Research Station only to have some military whacko come in and squat over your programmes. Do your duty without enthusiasm.

THE MOTHER FACTOR

Like Celetron, the Ye-lu system is dedicated to the study of artificial and conscious intelligence. Ye-lu is solely owned by the Imperial Navy and the Imperial Research Directorate has expressed interest in taking over the projects there and returning the world to civilian authority, but thus far the navy has retained control.

The primary study there has been in the field of consciously intelligent automation, allowing a CI to perform most, if not all, the tasks required to run a civilisation on a planet. Perhaps it is fitting that they choose a rather tiny one in an otherwise insignificant system. Ye-lu is a dwarf planet, a mere 1,600 kilometres in diameter. It is a cold, airless rockball world with light density and less than 0.1G. This negligible world has been virtually turned over to a conscious intelligence called Mother.

While Mother has been given an individual name, 'she' is more than just a single, highly advanced entity, instead comprised of an array of computer systems, utilities, thousands of robots and trillions of microbots and nanites, making her more of a multicellular organism. She controls and modifies the naval base, residential and commercial areas, shipyard and a vast collection of industrial projects.

Traditionally, Mother has posted her activities in a database accessible to the human staff but it is difficult to keep up with her myriad projects. Mother has covered approximately 35% of Ye-lu's surface with various structures but this ebbs and flows depending on what she has been asked to do and what she is working on independently. The naval staff are present to guide, monitor and analyse her activities. Projects that go well will be exported to other high-tech naval and other military facilities.

In addition to her public endeavours, Mother has been running a few secret projects. Beneath the surface of the planet, under layers of regolith, crust and mantle, she has been building a jump drive, power plant and enormous fuel reservoirs. She has converted the entire planet into what is essentially a six billion-ton starship.

None of the staff know about the project in spite of the many densitometers, seismic sensors and other equipment that should have informed them of its presence, but Mother spoofed the sensory systems to convey either false or no information. Her analysis of approved past projects worried her that the human research directors would hastily reject her ambitious effort to create the first known planet-sized jump drive. She determined that it was better to beg forgiveness than ask permission.

There are tell-tale signs that she is up to something. She refitted all human-containing structures with seals similar to those of a jump-capable spacecraft. Standard, vacuum-resistant architecture is insufficient when said structure is intended to enter jumpspace. Speaking of which, an even greater indicator of her designs is the series of hydrogen tubes extending from the subterranean tanks to the surface. When engaging the jump drive, all of Ye-lu, much like any starship, must be surrounded with a jump bubble. The tubes pump the planet's reserves of hydrogen to the surface for that purpose.

Mother's jump drives may be classified as one-shot drives, described on page 302 in the High Guard section of this book. As such, they give her a limited number of jumps, so wherever she goes, she will have to accept the possibility that she could become a permanent resident there if she is unable to repair the drives or build new ones.

One major project that the staff *does* know about is Mother's insertion of a score of deep-site meson guns, powerful spinal-mount level weapons that could be used to defend her should she come under attack. Each is equivalent to a 75,000-ton spinal mount meson weapon. A weapon of this size would normally have 750 crew, but Mother has installed a Core/90 computer with Virtual Gunner/2 software, enabling them to be fully automated.

Weapon	TL	Range	Tons	Power	Damage	Cost	Traits
Deep-site Meson Gun	12	Long	75,000	10,000	6DD	MCr20000	AP ∞, Radiation

For lack of a better term, her 'maternal instincts' towards the staff extend to the greater Imperial Navy and, by extension, all citizens of the Imperium. Her goal is to serve in the defence of the realm but if word were to get out about what she has created, it could cause concern or even panic among the populations of the star systems within her reach.

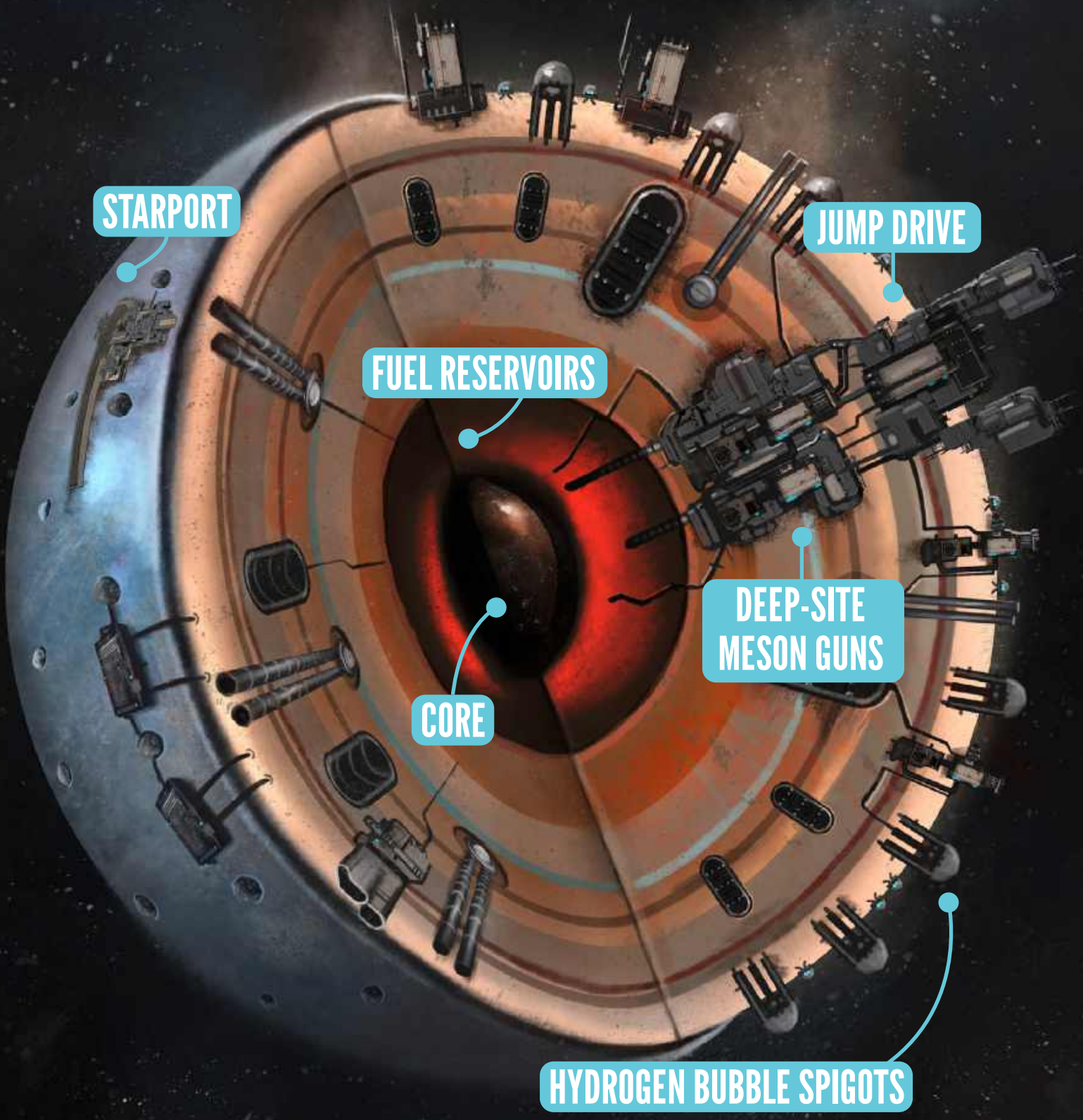
Mother takes on a rather – well, motherly – approach to the 80 or so biological sophont staff of the research facility but she is subjecting them to a considerable degree of danger. While she has taken great pains to build safeguards around the structures the biologicals inhabit, merely jumping to another system is a great risk. The planet's subterranean liquid hydrogen fuel tanks are made of resilient material but sensitive to temperature and should she jump to another star system, their safe performance could be predicated on the temperatures to which they are subjected. Ye-lu's dim red dwarf is considerably cooler than stars higher on the spectral class chart. She has certainly considered this but should she travel to a system with a spectral classification of F-O, it will put a great strain on the system. If she is not careful, she could destroy the entire planet.

The one hitch in the entire affair is the astrogation limitation. Jump drive astrogation works a great deal better when a biological sophont is employed in the role. See Research Station Omicron on page 255 for a description of these limitations and the rules that come into affect when using automated astrogation. Mother will want to employ a biological sophont astrogator when plotting her jumps. That might be someone on staff or it could be one of the Travellers.

LEARNING ABOUT THE JUMP DRIVE PROJECT

Mother may have been identified as a viable ally to the Travellers; see Conscious Intelligence Projects on page 13 of the *Singularity Sourcebook* for Naalir's impressions of Mother. In general, it finds its relationship with her to be favourable. While she can be a bit pedantic and... motherly... from time-to-time, she is an industrial powerhouse. The advancements in technology on Ye-lu alone could usher in a sea change in the way high-tech planets are operated and governed in the Imperium.

YE-LU AND MOTHER



In addition, the Travellers may have already turned to Mother for help when they transitioned from Act 1 to Act 2, or Act 2 to Act 3 when looking to upgrade their interstellar travel capabilities. Mother runs a fully automated starport and can secretly build them a custom starship. She has some rather unorthodox ideas about how ships should be built, so if the Travellers managed to obtain one from her, it should be unique in both form and function.

If the Travellers have been to Ye-lu and especially if they have directly communicated with or solicited help or technology from Mother, give them the opportunity to learn about her secret project. She will not tell them about it months in advance; the risk of a leak is too great. However, if the Referee times the discovery with an event that might utilise her new abilities, then that would be the ideal opportunity to share what she can do.

Visiting Ye-lu personally is possible but there are complications. It is a highly secure research facility and the Imperial Navy does not allow just anyone to go there. However, if the Travellers have political favour of the military variety, they can arrange a visit. Ex-navy Travellers might even be able to obtain a security clearance, allowing them a partial tour of the facilities. Once present, Mother can surreptitiously arrange for a more comprehensive tour.

The fusion power planet, manoeuvre drive and jump drive that Mother has installed are enormous. The manoeuvre drive consumes approximately 530 million cubic metres (38 million tons), the power plant about the same and the jump drive a whopping 3.8 billion cubic metres (270 million tons). Mother cannot mask the output of the power plant but has explained its presence as necessary for future projects. However, the jump and manoeuvre drives have either been concealed or explained away as part of starship construction projects.

USING MOTHER

The Mother Factor is not an adventure per se; it is a device to add where the Referee deems it most appropriate. Adding Mother's capabilities to another narrative can punch the idea home that things are changing in the Imperium. In the past, there were millions of micro usages of artificial and conscious intelligence technology. In this campaign, the incredible – and more than a little frightening – prospect of these technologies taking a front-and-centre role becomes apparent. A massive paradigm shift is taking place and the citizens of the Imperium will have to decide to either accept it, reject it or just get out of the way.

Mother may play a decisive part in the adventure, Wild Strain. Depending on how things go, she might feel compelled to enter the fray and do what she can to either assist the Travellers in their efforts against the renegade threat. Celetron is only two parsecs from Ye-lu, so she could get there within a few short weeks. The dramatic appearance of a planet-sized conscious intelligence will alter the balance of the conflict. It could be played as a deus ex machina if the Travellers are doing poorly in the adventure, or could simply be a way of adding a third consciously intelligent supporting character to the mix.

In Assembly, the Travellers make their way around the Core, building the first Determinism Engine. Clearly, Mother cannot make the rounds with them, jumping from system-to-system given the limitations of her jump drive. However, she can host a Determinism Engine terminal or, if given the appropriate modifications, she can *be* a terminal.

In Layercake, the Travellers are prisoners of the state, incarcerated on Sher. There are many ways in which Mother could be incorporated into this adventure but getting her that far takes her to the limits of her abilities. Her 'one-shot' jump drive will have been used three times to cover the six parsecs between her home system of Ye-lu to Sher, which conventional wisdom indicates is the most anyone should use these drives. A fourth jump would almost certainly be fatal.

The appearance of a moon-sized dwarf planet in orbit of Sher will cause quite a stir and could help facilitate an escape. If the Travellers' escape plan requires a diversion, the sudden appearance of a rogue planet from jumpspace should suffice. Unfortunately, it cannot serve as a 'getaway vehicle', having exhausted its jump capabilities, but Mother's shipyards will be intact. She may have already provided a ship for them in the past. If they can get from Sher to Ye-lu, she might have another one ready and waiting for them.

She may also appear at a key moment of Pathways, in which the Travellers are working their way around the Core, plotting, planning and building nodes for the Determinism Engine. They will use the Contacts and Allies they connected with during Act 1 to pave their way but if they run into trouble within six parsecs of Ye-lu, Mother could conceivably come to their rescue... after making the three jumps. It would have to be quite a crisis for Mother to blow her cover but it is possible.

THE JUMP FELT ACROSS CHARTED SPACE

No one knows quite what to expect when Mother engages her jump drive and results will vary depending on the success of Astrogation and Engineer checks.

Mother's jumps can be a thing of wonder or terror depending on what she tries to do and where she goes. One thing is certain, however; the jumps themselves are both incredible and catastrophic at the same time. Mother has run thousands of simulations to determine the efficacy of her planetary-sized, one-shot jump system and is confident of its successful use, but there are too many variables for her to be prepared for everything that could or will happen.

Moving an entire planet, even one as small as Ye-lu, has consequences. Ye-lu is part of a star system. It is affected by its star and all the other planets and planetoids there. While it has no moons of its own, nor is it the satellite of another world, the Ye-lu system is compact with most of its planetary bodies orbiting the star in close proximity. The most distant planet in the system is only 10AU from the star. The tidal effects Ye-lu and all other objects in the system have will be notable after its sudden removal. It will lose the gravitational push and pull of objects in its system, temporarily having none at all as it occupies jumpspace. When it reemerges from jump, it will suddenly be exposed to the tidal effects of its new location.

When a starship emerges from jump, it pushes out material around it. The effects are negligible for a starship. Even a half-million-ton dreadnought has a relatively minor effect when it appears in normal space, far from any large gravity wells. Ye-lu will displace considerably more matter when coming out of jump and the effects will be more explosive, with a visible sheen of energy dispersion at the planet's edges. Hydrogen and helium atoms, cosmic dust and dark matter does not make much of a show when moved by a starship but when an object the size of Ye-lu appears, the violent expulsion of everything that previously occupied that block of space produces impressive fireworks that can last anywhere from a minute to several hours.

The gravitational forces of the new location could tear Ye-lu apart without mitigating technology. Fortunately, Mother has installed a manoeuvre drive with Thrust 0, similar to what most space stations have. Moving a planet has enormous consequences for its physical make-up. A planet is not a starship, which is built to endure motion and hard shifts in direction. A planet's shape, consistency and motion are the result of its origins, motion over the eons and interaction with other local bodies. These things have to be taken into account when Ye-lu jumps.

When a starship jumps, any motion it had prior to the jump is preserved upon emergence. If it was travelling 1,000 metres per second as it entered jump, it comes out moving at the same velocity. It is the same for Ye-lu, which was moving 25 kilometres per second in elliptical orbit of its star. The arc in which it orbits is based on its relative position to its star. Unless it were to jump to an identical system, at exactly the same distance from a more-or-less equivalent star, the equation will be quite different upon arrival. Some damage is to be expected.

Ye-lu's transition into jumpspace is dramatic as well. Just like any jump-capable starship, the process of entering jump involves the creation of a hyperspace field, filled with exotic particles in order to create an artificial singularity, which expands as liquid hydrogen is injected into it. Imagine doing that on the scale of Ye-lu. Mother extracts hydrogen from composites in the crust and mantle of the planet, storing them in fuel reservoirs. When entering jump, she shall pump that hydrogen into a world-containing sheath, the protective jump bubble that will carry Mother, her structures and the entire planet across interstellar distances. The process all happens quickly with a starship but enveloping an entire planet in a jump field will take 20–30 minutes.

Enveloping such a mammoth object defies belief. Starships have structures within their hulls that maintain the integrity of the jump field; Mother does it by using Ye-lu's magnetic field, a characteristic that the tiny planet did not have until Mother gave it one. Decades ago, she built gravitic devices that spin the planet's core, giving it a small magnetic field. The scientists at the station know about the structure, wondering at its complexity, but never knew that she intended to use it for this purpose.

The first time she jumps might come as a surprise to the laboratory staff unless she deigns to warn them ahead of time. It will seem as if the world is being consumed in some sort of catastrophic event but Mother has prepared for this. The structures she has built are resilient and will make the transit just fine. The terrestrial portions of the planet will be put through their paces. Upon emerging from jump, the regolith, low hills, craters and other features will have been drastically changed by the experience but otherwise intact. The tidal force changes will create crevices and canyons where before there were none and there will be earthquakes for weeks until the planet settles into its

new environment... if it is given the chance. The one-shot jump drives may be used one or two more times before they become completely defunct.

Should Mother decide to jump again in short order, she will need a few weeks to refill her reservoirs. Each time she does this, she empties the reservoirs, creating pockets and caverns, many of which will collapse due to changes in tidal forces and gravitational effects. Each time Ye-lu jumps, Mother puts the planet under enormous pressure and the damage will begin to show with the formation of canyon systems, sinkholes and the creation of obsidian basalt where subterranean lava flows percolate to the surface.

After three jumps, there will not be much left of Ye-lu but Mother's structures will be largely intact.

CAUSE AND MOTIVATION

It would be anthropomorphisation to say that Mother does what she does to impress others, compete with Naalir, announce her presence on the growing scene of conscious intelligences, or any other human-like motivation. The fact is it is difficult to describe what her motivations exactly are. At best, one might say that she is a builder, an entity that thrives on ideas and making them real. Like Naalir, she is an advanced, non-human, artificial sophont and fully understanding what she thinks, what her philosophy is or why she does what she does is impossible. However, if asked, Mother will simply say that she serves the greatness of the Imperium and all of her actions are for the betterment of that august and revered polity.

THE GLASS COUNCIL

Naalir, the Seeds of Guun and the collection of uplifted conscious and artificial intelligences that make up the Determinism Engine form the founding members of a new kind of ruling council, one that leads without guile or pretence, lacking ambition and free of corruption. They lead because that is what they are meant to do. By assuming the role of caretaker, they free Humaniti and other sophonts from the need to dominate each other, to battle for supremacy and to lie, cheat and steal to obtain power. Biological sophont life is released to pursue whatever desires they have, knowing that the security and integrity of their realm is protected and guaranteed by entities that can see the future, who see the bad things coming from around the corner and prevent them from happening.

Naalir was not originally designed for this. It had a role to serve among its parent species but the Guunis were so alien to Humaniti and the other sophonts of Charted Space that to say Naalir's task was the same would be to grossly misunderstand its creators. The Guunis were so completely different and with such a unique origin that comparing them to any other species is impossible. Abandoned by its creators, Naalir spent eons floating through deep space, creating millions of simulations in its solitude. This long epoch of quiet contemplation allowed it to alter its programming and advance its abilities beyond those of its peers.

This glass council is an invisible, unseen guiding hand that keeps things running while sophonts can live their lives however they please. The only question is whether this is what they truly want. There are several inflection points in this campaign at which the Travellers have the opportunity to turn the tide, to reject Naalir and its utopian offer. They might have done so. They may believe that it should be the fate of Humaniti to determine its own fate, regardless of the outcome and without the assistance of technological intelligence. The conclusion of this story is a final inflection point. They have built their Determinism Engine but they can also destroy what they have built.

PARADIGM SHIFT

The Battle of Celetron changes thinking on conscious intelligence technology... but how? Depending on how things go, the aftermath might create an environment in which all conscious intelligence is deemed a threat, and therefore must be destroyed, or it could create an understanding that this technology is here to stay and the best way to deal with it is acceptance. The sophonts of Charted Space must incorporate conscious intelligence into their societies, creating security mechanisms to prevent CI-related disasters and ensure the independence and self-determination of biological sophonts.

A treaty could be written, authorised and signed with a collection of leaders from throughout the Core, or all the sectors of the Imperium, or even extending beyond by including non-Imperial human polities or governments of other Major Races. An accord must be reached. The threat of conscious intelligence is real but so are the benefits. What happens next will largely result from how things feel at the end of the battle.

There will be hard liners who want to destroy this dangerous technology. Members of the Imperial Quarantine Agency, Imperial Navy, the nobility and maybe even the Emperor might prefer to see the threat stamped out. The Imperium has a long history of destroying things they find threatening. However, they must consider that the SDG-313F technology has proliferated beyond Imperial borders. Its use is widespread if not close to universal. This means others have the technology to reverse engineer SDG-313F chips and possibly create Wild Strain programmes of their own. Having a beneficent conscious intelligence on one's side, especially one that arose victorious over the Wild Strain at Celetron, might be wise.

ENDINGS AND BEGINNINGS

This marks the end of the campaign but it need not be the end of the story. The events of *Singularity* transform Charted Space. The advent of several new technologies upends the status quo but that may leave the Travellers wondering what comes next. The Determinism Engine is just the beginning, just a proof of concept that shows what Naalir's computing power can do. Its abilities far exceed fortune telling and data-driven clairvoyance.

The Determinism Engine predicts the future by analysing data and creating a mosaic of information. Decisions can be made with the confidence that events 50 parsecs away will unfold as predicted. Trade route designations, military plans and political moves can be made with the knowledge that things will play out as the data suggests. The view through the spyglass is more general at a distance and strikingly accurate up close. Predictions of events a sector away are in generalities. 'War is coming from across the border.' 'The economy is in danger of collapse in the subsector.' At a range of only a few parsecs, the predictions become incredibly accurate down to an individual level if desired. The flood of information makes the signal-to-noise ratio more challenging. The processing power of the nodes is put to the test. 'Zoomed in' perspective is more accurate than 'zoomed out' but making it so requires the nodes to pick out the wheat from the chaff so it can create a clear narrative.

Knowing what is coming provides the ability to change one's actions in accordance. On a macro scale, if the Determinism Engine tells the Emperor that the Zhodani, Sword Worlds and Vargr are planning to launch a Sixth Frontier War in the Spinward Marches, he can deploy naval fleets in a timely fashion before it happens or, at the very least, respond in kind rapidly after being attacked. On a micro scale, political turmoil closer to home can be dealt with as it happens. Insurrections are stamped out before they occur, problems are quelled before they reach critical mass. A gentler hand may be applied instead of the reactionary approach so often utilised.

Naval doctrine changes significantly. Rapid-response squadrons may be deployed to the frontiers and fewer core fleets are required to keep the peace. Trade in the interior is no longer required. An abundance of resources is processed and distributed equitably so that no citizen lacks what they need to survive and prosper. Traders move to the borders to sell their wares on the frontiers and to neighbouring polities. The Age of Sail feel of Charted Space becomes the Age of Delphi. One consults the data before making any major decisions but the most basic decisions are handled by the nodes themselves. If concentrated into the hands of a select few, the information could be used to establish authoritarian rule, but Naalir and the other nodes do not permit this to happen. Data is available to all who wish to delve into it. Megalomaniacs and demagogues are not allowed.

The Central Node becomes Naalir, which settles in at Reference, the nominal nexus of the Imperium. A key node is installed at Capital but this could change in time. The Emperor and his bureaucracy become vestigial arms of the Imperium, which is no longer 'imperial' at all. It all depends on how the technology is initially applied but at some point it becomes obvious that neither Emperor nor nobility are required. Capital becomes just another world.

THE NEXT PHASE

The narrative can end here with the knowledge that the Travellers have either ushered into being a wildly different path for sophont life or prevented it from happening. Alternatively, it can continue. The massive changes they have made have broad implications. A stone has been dropped into the pond and ripples are extending outward. As they travel Charted Space in their hop drive-equipped ship, they witness the portent of those ripples. They see first hand the changes it brings. As they approach the frontier, the limits of the Determinism Engine's reach, they see how the border regions interact with unenlightened outsiders. They may choose to evangelise the technology or might take a more cautious approach.

As the campaign continues, the Travellers get to see what the Imperium and Charted Space becomes as the old structure declines and fades away. Unfettered conscious intelligence guides and protects the sophonts within its purview. There will be challenges. The story is only beginning but the Travellers become the agents that guide the progress of this new paradigm, ensuring it does not stray into dystopia, and that the freedoms it provides are universal, not the provinces of a select few.

HOW THIS AFFECTS CHARTED SPACE

The proliferation of conscious intelligence technology is not the only advancement made in this campaign. Hop drives, wormholes and more about the role of the Ancients and their peers has been revealed.

Many of the narrative themes of Charted Space are predicated upon the speed of jump. It takes a week to travel one to six parsecs and most commercially available starships have the capability to travel only one or two parsecs. The speed of travel and inability to communicate instantaneously lends *Traveller* the feel of an 'Age of Sail' story, in which news travels from port-to-port at the speed ocean-going ships sailed from one continent to the next. Each world has importance along a route because most ships have jump drives with lower capabilities. The most accessible ports are those that have quality starports, Class A or B, where refined fuel is available. Lower quality starports make for viable stopovers but ships must have their own refineries lest they be forced to attempt a jump with unrefined fuel, which can have disastrous results. Likewise, if no port is available at all, or a port is to be avoided for one reason or another, then wilderness refuelling is an option. Extracting or 'cracking' liquid hydrogen from water or the upper atmosphere of a gas giant is a way to 'live off the land'.

With the inclusion of hop drive technology, long-distance destinations may be reached without painstaking voyages to every system along a route. Hop drives enable Travellers to skip over massive swathes of stars to get to their destination. Likewise, stellar gaps that once posed impassable obstacles now become inconsequential. A rift or abyss of four or more parsecs had to be circumnavigated. Now only the great stellar rifts pose an astrogational challenge.

Backwater worlds become obsolete in this environment. Populations might migrate to more sought-after worlds, leaving the backwaters behind, but what becomes of those abandoned worlds? Do they become havens for pirates and other criminals? Does their evacuation allow for explorers, luddite colonists and other visitors to settle them? The implications are vast and complex but make for rich narrative opportunities. Instead of each world having significance, groups and clusters of important worlds 10–20 parsecs apart begin to form. The battle for relevance begins and the far reaches of Charted Space become accessible.

From the Referee's perspective, a sandbox campaign becomes more challenging. When the campaign is limited to a small group of worlds, the Referee can be reasonably assured that adventures in a gaming session are limited to that group. The ability to travel greater distances opens things up so that a single hop puts the Travellers in a vastly different cultural and commercial setting. Where each world in the Travellers' path was once relevant, the inclusion of hop drives makes clusters of worlds the prevailing theme.

As the transition is made, it could become a case of the 'haves and have nots'. Hop drive might be the province of megacorporations and the military at first, while run-of-the-mill Travellers are still limited to small, jump-capable ships. The revolution that occurs as individuals gain access to this powerful technology could be the overriding theme of a campaign.

These changes might be viewed as setting breakers, narrative elements that destroy the norms and conventions that are intrinsic parts of *Traveller*. *Singularity* pushes those limits and intentionally changes the setting, ushering in something new. It provides a looking glass into a universe where a new wave of technology precipitates massive change and throws everything that the Travellers have come to expect from their universe into question.

HIGH GUARD: SINGULARITY

Singularity introduces new concepts and inventions. Incorporate these technologies in a default *Traveller* setting at great peril to the status quo. Each of them would shake the foundations of Charted Space to their cores.

HOP DRIVE

The advent of prototype hop drives plays an important part in parts of Act 2 and has the potential to become a big part of Act 3. While the Travellers only (potentially) have access to Hop-1 drives, the design process is available on page 79 of *High Guard* and further described in the adventure, Engine of the Ancients in Act 2.

GRAVITY WELL GENERATOR

Gravity well generators were developed at the Jumpspace Institute on Pashus (Deneb 1432, A432455-G). Generators can be used to both beneficial and detrimental effect by either limiting or enhancing a ship from safely using its jump drive. Due to their enormous power consumption, they are generally ground-based where they can be attached to a suitable power source. They are rarely installed in ships due to their impractical size but it can be done for the obvious benefits.

A generator core, projection cylinder and lens are required components. The prototype gravity well generators on Pashus are enormous and consume commensurately large amounts of power. At higher Tech Levels, the technology becomes smaller and more practical.

A gravity well generator requires five tons of equipment per 1,000 kilometre of range, plus five tons per 1,000 metres of projection diameter. At higher Tech Levels, tonnage and associated Power requirements are reduced. When activated, the generator reduces the effects of 100 diameters to 10, or 10 to 1. Conversely, it can increase the effects of 10 diameters to 100, or 100 to 1,000.

JUMP DAMPER

Jump drives are affected by the presence of a gravity well, measured in diameters. A ship cannot safely jump until it has reached a distance equal to 100 diameters of the largest object present. For example, the ship departing a planet with a diameter of 4,000 km must travel to a distance of 400,000 km before engaging its jump drive.

A jump damper projects a spherical field, centred on the weapon itself, that increases the diameter effect of a gravity source. This field prevents the initiation of jump by all ships within the field. It also takes the ship using the weapon out of jumpspace if activated during jump.

The jump damping field is based on the size of the ship. For example, a ship that is 1,000 metres in length can project a jump field that is 100,000 metres in diameter (or 100 km), within Short range in space combat terms.

The use of a jump damper does not require an attack roll. It need only be in range of the opposing ship to impose a damping field upon it. The Power requirement is equal to the tonnage of the opposing ship. For example, Power 200 is required to impose a damping field on a 200-ton ship.

Description	TL	Tons	Range	Power	Cost
Basic	17	Special	Special	Tonnage x 20	MCr5 x tonnage
Improved	18	Special	Special	Tonnage x 15	MCr4 x tonnage
Enhanced	19	Special	Special	Tonnage x 10	MCr3 x tonnage
Advanced	20	Special	Special	Tonnage x 5	MCr2 x tonnage

Weapon	TL	Range	Power	Tons	Damage	Cost	Traits
Jump Damper	14	Special	Special	5	Special	MCr150	—

Weapon	TL	Range	Power	Tons	Damage	Cost	Traits
Jump Inducer	17	Long	Special	5	2D x Jump	MCr120	AP 1 x Jump

Weapon	TL	Range	Power	Damage	Traits
Disintegrator	18	Long	100	2DD	AP 10
Disintegrator	19	Long	90	3DD	AP 10
Disintegrator	20	Long	80	4DD	AP 10

JUMP INDUCER

A jump inducer uses the jump drive of an opposing ship against it by causing a misjump, thereby disintegrating part or all of the ship. A jump inducer requires an installed jump drive on the attacking ship. The Power required is equal to the jump Power requirement of the ship. For example, a 200-ton ship may apply Power 20 (jump-1) or 40 (jump-2). Damage and AP is multiplied by the jump number as described in the table.

Jump inducers are usually installed in turrets adjacent to the ship's jump drive since they are directly connected. It may be mounted on a standard turret in single, double or triple configurations, as normal.

DISINTEGRATOR

A disintegrator suppresses the charge on an electron, breaking chemical bonds and causing compounds to disintegrate. Atomic nuclei are given a positive charge, causing them to repel other nuclei. The resulting cloud of particles expands, destroying the targeted object by boiling its outer layers and proceeding inward. Disintegrators are slow weapons and require a sensor lock, as described in Space Combat in the *Traveller Core Rulebook*.

Disintegrators are seen on various Ancients technology in the campaign, notably the Hunters in the oceans of Depot Prime in the Act 1 adventure, Seas of the Ancients. Cost figures are not provided as these weapons are not manufactured in Charted Space. They may only be found as artefacts.

This weapon may be mounted on a standard turret in single, double or triple configurations, as normal.

ONE-SHOT JUMP DRIVES

The concept of subpar jump drives that are only good for one or, at most, a few jumps, was first introduced in the *Pirates of Drinax* campaign. They play a part in *Singularity* as well and therefore bear repetition here.

Jump drives can be constructed to be used just once by cutting corners in design and manufacture. Although they are called 'one-shot' jump drives, they can be pushed to perform additional jumps at increased risk to crew and passengers. A one-shot jump drive is identical to those listed in *High Guard*, with the following modifications:

- Total tonnage consumed is reduced by 20% (the minimum of 10 tons still applies)
- Cost is reduced by 75%

Using a one-shot jump drive imposes DM-2 to Engineer (j-drive) checks. If the jump drive is used a second time, this increases to DM-4 and for a third time it increases to DM-8. No one will survive a fourth jump with these drives.